Pope says Notre Dame is numero uno

COMMONWEAL

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DAVID TOOLAN on 'Soul' by Angela Tilby

EDWARD T. OAKES on 'A Mind in Love' by Barbara Reynolds

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DISPUTED QUESTIONS: HOMOSEXUALITY

SCRIPTURE & THE SPIRIT
Luke Timothy Johnson

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CORRESPONDENCE

Merchandising mayhem

Wayne, Pa.

To the Editors: Your editorial about CNN's treatment of the sexual abuse accusations against Cardinal Joseph Bernardin ["CNN's Fall from Grace," December 3, 1993] was on the mark. But CNN was not alone in exploiting the item as a juicy sex story, ideal for boosting ratings. The CBS Philadelphia outlet, WCAU-TV (Channel 10), was similarly shameless, and I'm sure CNN and WCAU were not alone.

I agree with *Commonweal* that these episodes are not necessarily Catholic-bashing but just one more indication that TV news has degenerated into TV entertainment. It is an established fact that sex and violence sell, and the need for informing and enlightening the public has much lower priority than increasing ratings and profits. Our Philadelphia stations learned years ago that their ratings would go up when their news programs led off with the shootings, rapes, and other mayhem of the day. As a result, 11 P.M. is the blood-and-gore hour on the airways of the City of Brotherly Love.

From my Philadelphia perspective, the print media's handling of the Cardinal Bernardin story has been more balanced and responsible. I know we can't go back to the early days of television, when the first TV news people came out of newspaper and magazine journalism, and brought with them some professional standards and ethics. But can't something be done before our TV news shows degenerate totally into something suitable only for voyeurs? Isn't there some kind of professional organization of TV journalists that debates this sort of thing, establishes standards, and recognizes superior observance of these norms? If not, why not? If so, where are they when we need them?

JOSEPH P. SPAMPINATO

CNN's long fall

Redondo Beach, Calif.

To the Editors: Your commentary on CNN's unfair treatment of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, if anything, understated the case. I was in Europe when the story broke, and observed that it was given heavy coverage there with a strong pro-accuser slant. Although, as you note, there has been no evidence to judge the accuser's veracity apart from his allegation of recovered memory, a reporter for CNN helpfully noted that he had "passed" a polygraph exam—as though this were complete and sufficient verification of everything he had to say.

Though the polygraph exam has some use as an investigative tool, it is highly suspect as a device for determining ultimate truth. Under California law, polygraph findings are inadmissible in court. In this case, who knows how the exam was conducted, what questions were asked, or, indeed, whether the exam was actually conducted? CNN simply adopted the statements of the accuser's counsel as reliable statements of fact.

Given how eagerly travelers seek out CNN, it is dismaying to see that this is the sort of "unbiased news" they get.

TIMOTHY BROWNE

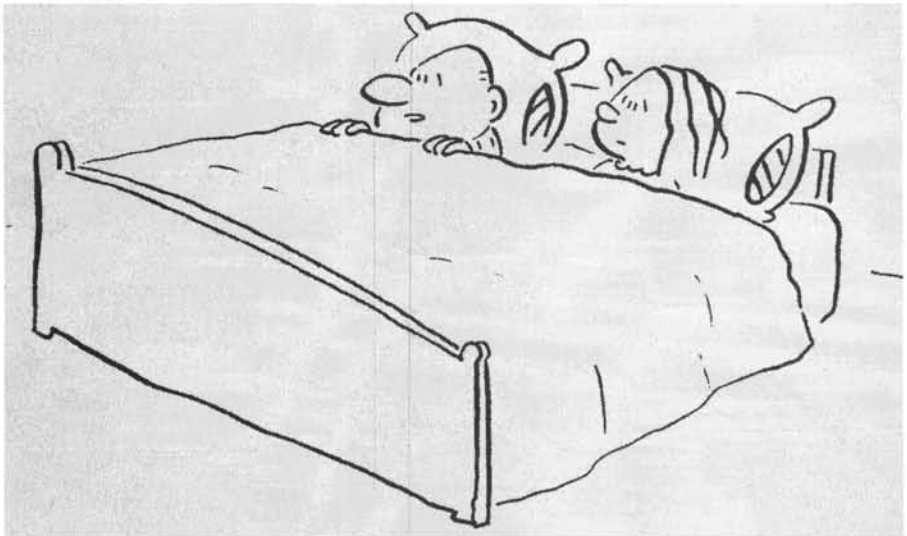
The writer is a deputy district attorney in Los Angeles County.

Vietnam: more absurdity

East Hampton, N.Y.

To the Editors: James F. O'Brien's superb "Why Aren't We in Vietnam?" [December 3, 1993] highlights America's most recent absurd policy in dealing with that country.

(Continued on page 30)



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COMMONWEAL

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Numero uno

Reactions were fast and furious last week in the wake of Pope John Paul II's *motu proprio* apparently ordering American Catholics to recognize the University of Notre Dame as the nation's number-one football team. The papal declaration, entitled *Victoriae splendor*, warned against "undue acquiescence" in polls and computer rankings like the ones that awarded the national championship to Florida State University.

"The bishops recognize the appropriate role for secular expertise in an area like football and the possibility of disagreement among people of good will," said Archbishop William H. Keeler of Baltimore, president of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops. "But we welcome the words of the Holy Father, which not only carries a special weight for Catholics but can provide a unique contribution to the discussion of this divisive question among all citizens."

The Reverend Richard John Neuhaus was more adamant. In a column appearing in the *Wall Street Journal* twenty minutes after *Victoriae splendor* was issued in Rome, Father Neuhaus rejoiced that the pope, after helping bring down communism, "has now confronted the naked gridiron.

"John Paul has understood the statism latent in the demand that we check our faith at the stadium gate," wrote Neuhaus. "It remains to be seen whether the bishops and their liberal-minded staffs can break loose from the Notre Dame-hating pieties of the National Council of Churches."

Frances Kissling of Catholics for a Free Choice appeared on CNN's "Sports Tonight." The papal statement was "another outdated aggression by celibate old men against the reproductive rights of women," she said. She was joined by Jeannine Gramick of New Ways Ministries who said that the document insulted gays.

The speakers acknowledged that *Victoriae splendor* did not explicitly mention contraception, abortion, or homosexuality. "And nothing about half the human race either—just what you'd expect from patriarchy," said Ruth Fitzpatrick of the Women's Ordination Conference, interviewed on "Good Morning America."

But the papal document also did not mention Notre Dame or Florida State. In fact, it did not explicitly mention football.

Still, there was little mistaking John Paul II's meaning: "Some people have suggested that the rightful autonomy of championship, which derives from divine wisdom and takes its pattern from the journey to God, can be separated from truth, defining victory according to subjective judgments aggregated by modern methods of polling or according to mechanistic rankings emerging from computer sciences," the pope declared.

"These theories," he continued, "radically sever the intimate relationship between victory and the living encounter of opposing teams, and moreover assert, according to certain theologians, that the sphere of the magisterium does not extend to man as

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athlete, *homo ludens*."

In an article in *America*, the Reverend Avery Dulles outlined three distinct models of picking the national football champions, represented by the Associated Press poll of sportswriters, the *USA Today*/CNN poll of coaches, and the *New York Times* computer rankings. Each model, he said, had its own advantages and disadvantages.

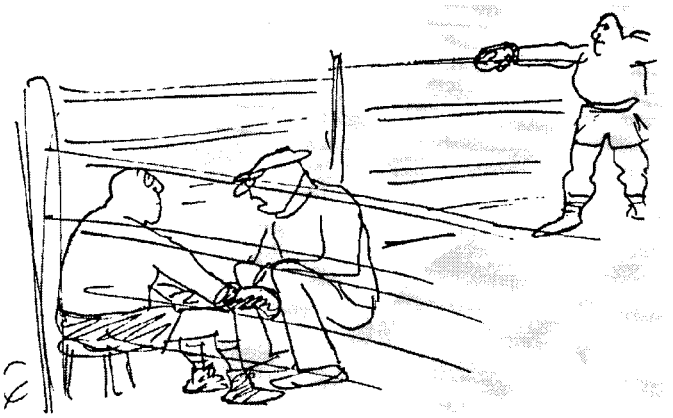
Victoriae splendor, however, offered a fourth, overarching model, Father Dulles explained, "less important for its specific fallible judgment than for its reminder to Catholics that the last word on balancing methods must be pronounced within the community of faith and in fidelity to Christian sources."

In an editorial headlined "Victoriae's Secrets," the *New York Times* wrote that while the pope's moral opinions deserved respect, his time would be better spent urging athletes to use condoms. Cardinal John O'Connor took the *Times*'s editorial to task in a 5,000-word personal column in *Catholic New York*, the archdiocesan newspaper.

George Weigel, president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, suggested that the pope had been influenced by Michael Novak's 1976 volume *The Joy of Sports*. Others thought that the pontiff was swayed by his well-known Marian devotion.

At Notre Dame, Coach Lou Holtz, whose team not only had the same record of eleven wins and one loss as Florida State but also defeated the Seminoles 31-24 last November 13, said he felt vindicated.

But the Reverend Richard McBrien, former chairman of the Notre Dame theology department, said that his university affiliation could not silence him. "I don't want to exaggerate," he said, "but *Victoriae splendor* is the Vatican equivalent of Saddam Hussein's seizure of Kuwait." The church was being pushed back into a preconciliar era, he added, an era when Notre Dame football had been considered more important than studying pastoral letters or debating women's ordination.



"He's bigger than you, he's stronger than you, he's younger than you. It's time we talked strategy."

At Boston College, which handed Notre Dame its single loss (41-39) in a November 20 upset, several professors asked whether the document's teaching about "living encounters of opposing teams" might not indicate that the national championship belonged to BC.

At Florida State, Catholic students and faculty maintained that *Victoriae splendor* did not apply to them. Noting that throughout the season their team had averaged a 31.3-point margin of victory compared to Notre Dame's 18.7 margin, they said that the papal condemnation was directed only at extreme theories that would have refused Notre Dame the championship even if their season records had been identical in every detail.

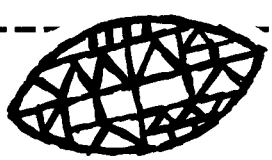
"The pope implies that we want to separate the intrinsic nature of championship and the object of the act of the victory from the binding dependence of freedom on truth and the natural knowledge of Eternal Law," said a Catholic linebacker. "But I never heard anyone on the team say that. It's a complete caricature of our views." A Florida political figure said that he was personally in agreement with the pope, but as an elected official he had to abide by the decisions of the voters in the national polls.

"Christ's Vicar has spoken," wrote the *Wanderer* while urging readers to send the Vatican examples of modernist doctrines taught at Notre Dame.

The *National Catholic Reporter* lamented that Notre Dame football was big business and that the whole game had become a "domestic rehearsal for brutal American domination around the globe." The paper expressed regret that the pope had not called on Catholics to limit themselves to gender-inclusive touch football without keeping won-loss recoreds.

"The Holy Father could have reminded the People of God that the first shall be last and vice versa," said Tom Fox, editor of the liberal weekly, "but that might have threatened the power fixation of the Vatican itself."

The editor of *Commonweal* said that she had no immediate comment but that the magazine's next issue would be completely devoted to a symposium on *Victoriae splendor* aimed at promoting a discussion that went beyond the sterile polarization of the Right and Left. "I like to play center," she said.



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REPORT ON CHIAPAS

SEEDS OF A REVOLT

ALL ONE NEEDED TO DO WAS LISTEN

The recent uprising in Chiapas, Mexico, deserves some background. By happenstance, I can provide the following.

Sitting for several weeks in the town square of San Cristóbal de las Casas late last summer (*see* my article, "Lawless Roads Still: The 'Red' Bishop of Chiapas," *Commonweal*, December 17, 1993), I was struck by the number of police and military personnel circling the *zocalo*. When various remnants of the Maya—young Ch'ols, Tzotzils, and Tzeltals—came into town, they seemed almost imperceptible, except for their colorful tribal clothing. The *Indios* from San Juan Chamulas, in white or black ponchos, and the Tzeltals in red-and-white-striped ponchos, broke the pattern of uniformed soldiers standing about everywhere. I sat alone and read at the same park bench every afternoon, while the police circled the *zocalo* and the Maya went about like clockwork figures selling their native wares. By 5 P.M., the *Indios* had retreated to their villages, leaving the plaza nearly empty.

One afternoon, boredom encouraged some of the *Indios* to ask what I was reading. The book I held in my hands was by Rosario Castellanos, author of *Balún Canán* (1957) and *Oficio de tiniebals* (1964), novels about San Cristóbal and the plight of the indigenous peoples. Most did not know about Mexico's first woman ambassador, who was born in *la capital* but had been reared in Comitán, Chiapas, and who died in middle age. I told them she had directed my work at the Universidad Iberoamericana in Mexico City, when I was young like them. They laughed and then became somber.

One, José, asked if I knew about Comitán. Way back in 1940, a president had promised the *Indios* there a piece of land (*un paraje*) for each *Indio*. But three years ago, the promise had been erased when their land was forcibly taken by the Mexican Army. A minor rebellion had taken place and a group known as the *Organization Campesina Emiliano Zapata* (Farmworkers' Organization Emiliano Zapata) was formed. They asked if I knew of the hero of the 1910 Mexican Revolution, Emiliano Zapata, and I nodded. Another said OCEZ was a group that was seeking to redress land disputes over titles. One even said that open rebellion might take place before December. It was my turn to laugh. How could an uprising take place with so great a police presence in San Cristóbal? Their faces became muted. No one spoke for a while.

Then another asked if I knew that the president of Mexico had changed the constitution. Miguel stated rhetorically: "How can the constitution be changed after so many years?" I played devil's advocate and asked, "What changes?" Did I not know that Article 27 had changed their lives? Before, their *paraje* could not be sold. The dismantling of Article 27 had privatized all lands. Now they could sell, and would probably be forced to sell by local landowners or the Mexican Army. Miguel added: "Already we hear that the Japanese want a part of the Chiapas Highlands for timber."

I responded in astonishment, "Here, so far away?"

They responded in unison, "Yes, here near the village of San Juan Chamula, where the Maya believe the creation was born." My friends eventually left and I continued reading.

When the armed occupation of San Cristóbal, Altamirano, Las Margaritas, Rancho Nuevo, and Ocozingo took place by the indigenous Maya at 5 A.M.. New Year's day, I immediately called San Cristóbal to see if my friends were safe. My contact could tell me little, except that what had happened seemed inevitable: "The Maya know they will die in shame when government forces come to take possession of their *paraje*, so some feel they might as well die with dignity, defending what little they have." It is winter and I do not laugh now. ALBERTO HUERTA

Alberto Huerta, S.J., is associate professor in the Department of Modern and Classical Languages at the University of San Francisco, San Francisco, California.

OF SEVERAL MINDS Edward Gaffney, Jr.

PASS THE PEYOTE

THE RELIGIOUS FREEDOM RESTORATION ACT

Last November the president signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, or RFRA, a piece of legislation that a virtually unanimous Congress (three senators voted against it) designed to set stronger limits on governmental authority than the Supreme Court thought necessary in a 1990 case known as *Employment Division* v. *Smith*. In *Smith*, the Court denied unemployment compensation benefits to two drug counselors who had been fired for consuming a controlled substance. If this were just another drug case, the result would be completely predictable. But the case was really about penalizing religious worship, for the "drug" in question was peyote used sacramentally in a ceremony of the Native American Church.

The reverence that Native Americans have for the buds of this cactus plant is tied to the centuries-old belief that it contains the presence of the deity and has healing power. Recognizing these realities, Congress and nearly half of the state legislatures expressly exclude this sacred use of peyote from their prohibition of illicit drugs. At the time of the *Smith* case Oregon did not have such an exemption (it now does), so a bare majority of the

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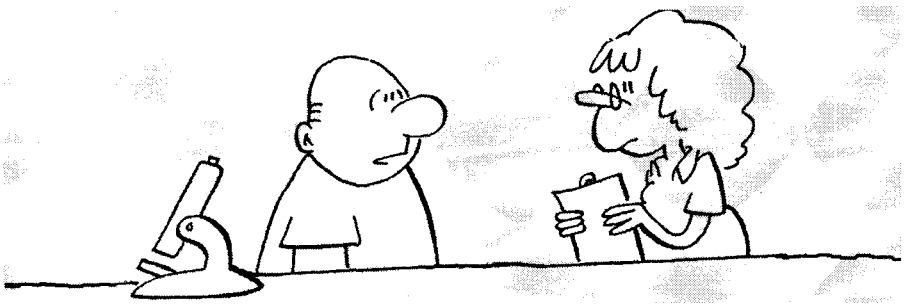
Court reasoned that America could no longer "afford the luxury" of giving any special consideration to religious conscience when it comes into conflict with a generally applicable rule of law.

Prior to *Smith*, the Supreme Court had repeatedly taught that the Free Exercise Clause requires that the government may not enforce a law or policy that burdens the exercise of a sincere religious belief unless (1) the law is based on a supreme public necessity, not an ordinary public interest, and (2) there is no less restrictive alternative to the burden that the law places on religious freedom. By abandoning these two requirements, *Smith* radically diminished the protection afforded to the exercise of religion, and RFRA has now restored these two standards for limiting governmental power over matters of religious belief and action.

In its ringing *Declaration on Religious Freedom*, Vatican II proclaimed: "All persons are to be immune from coercion on the part of individuals or of social groups and of any human power, so that in matters religious no one is to be forced to act in a manner contrary to his own beliefs. Nor is anyone to be restrained from acting in accordance with his own beliefs, whether privately or publicly, whether alone or in association with others, within due limits." Although this text did not resolve the particular issue of whether religious freedom should be protected by a *judicial* test such as the one we have had in American law since 1963, it provided sufficient motivation for the United States Catholic Conference to join with civil liberties organizations and with Americans of every religious faith in a broad-based political coalition that supported RFRA.



"Oh-oh. One of them got a look at my eye, and started a religion!"

What united the USCC with the National Council of Churches and a host of Jewish organizations, the American Civil Liberties Union with the National Association of Evangelicals, Concerned Women for America with People for the American Way in this coalition was expressed well in the Williamsburg Charter, a bicentennial document: "Religious liberty finally depends on neither the favors of the state and its officials nor the vagaries of tyrants or majorities. Religious liberty in a democracy is a right that may not be submitted to vote and depends on the outcome of no election. A society is only as just and free as it is respectful of this right, especially towards the beliefs of its smallest minorities and least popular communities."

Although this statement resonates with earlier Supreme Court decisions involving the Jehovah's Witnesses, a bare majority of the Court in *Smith* indicated that if religious claimants wanted protection for their convictions, they would have to turn to the political branches of government for legislative and executive exemptions. There have been times when this advice has been beneficial to religious minorities. For example, in 1986, Jews effectively lobbied Congress to overturn a remarkably insensitive opinion of the Supreme Court that had held that the military could dismiss an observant Jew for wearing a yarmulke.

As a general proposition, however, the advice that minorities without political clout should resort to the political process for protection of their civil liberties is useless. Imagine the Jehovah's Witnesses going hat in hand to the very legislatures in the 1940s that were doing their level best to put them out of business, at least within their states. Or imagine any other religious community when it was a vulnerable minority—and all religious communities were in this condition at some point in their histories—and you will understand why the provisions of the Bill of Rights were meant to apply generally to set limits on all forms of governmental power, and why—within our polity at least—these rights must be judicially enforceable. It was for this reason that Justice Harry Blackmun wrote in his dissent in *Smith*: "I do not believe the Founders thought their dearly bought freedom from religious persecution a 'luxury,' but an essential element of liberty." We can breathe a little easier now that RFRA has put religious freedom back where it belongs, at the top of the list of all of our precious civil liberties. □

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DISPUTED QUESTIONS

A REFERENDUM IN MAINE VOTING ON GAY RIGHTS

James Kales

One might say that the Catholic church has a large presence in Lewiston, Maine. Most of this small city's 41,000 residents are Franco-Americans, products of a wave of French Catholic immigration from Quebec in the early part of this century, which filled the town's bustling textile mills and shoe factories. Irish-Americans make up much of the remainder of the population. All told, over 75 percent of the town's residents belong to one of its six Catholic churches, which pop up on the unsuspecting visitor with almost minimarket frequency. So it's not surprising that when a gay-rights battle erupted here last year, the positions and policies of the Catholic church would be front and center, whether the church liked it or not.

The debate started last January, when the city council approved a nondiscrimination ordinance covering sexual orientation. Supporting the ordinance was a group called Equal Protection Lewiston (EPL), led by Lewiston Police Chief Laurent F. Gilbert. Chief Gilbert—who is married, a father of three, and Catholic—seems at first glance an anomalous choice to lead a gay-rights movement. However, the local gay and lesbian community remains very much closeted and without a strong voice. Further, as a twenty-five-year veteran of Lewiston's police force, Gilbert was aware that more than a few gay bashings have occurred over the years in this seemingly sleepy town. That was one of the reasons his department formed a Hate/Bias Crimes Task Force in 1991.

The task force helped improve relations between the town's gay community and the local police. Still, according to local gays, fear remained in reporting violence because they could be discriminated against if their sexual orientation was made public. "I saw this as a cry for help," said Gilbert, "and I responded."

In the fall of 1992, Gilbert and the other members of the Hate/Bias Crimes Task Force drew up a ten-page ordinance "to prevent discrimination in employment, housing, access to public accommodations, or in the extension of credit on account of sexual orientation." Gilbert proposed the ordinance to the council in January '93, and after a heated public debate it was approved by a five-to-two margin.

Then came the opposition, in the form of a group called ACT (All Catholics for Truth). ACT, which soon changed its name to Citizens of Lewiston for the Repeal (COLFR) to broaden its base, succeeded in gathering the requisite signatures to bring the ordinance up for a public referendum. That vote came last November, and the ordinance lost by a two-to-one margin.

Throughout the public debate, the Catholic church, through the Diocese of Portland, maintained a position of "neutrality" on the ordinance. The Reverend Michael Henchal, chancellor of the diocese, said the ordinance was vague as to whether it applied to homosexual orientation only, or whether homosexual behavior also would be covered. Henchal, in fact, eventually backed an amendment drawn up by several local Catholic lawyers to try to clarify this issue. The proposed amendment specified that "the intent of this ordinance is to protect persons against discrimination which is based solely on a status or tendency, not to protect or endorse behavior, whether or not related to such a status or tendency."

The amendment was put aside, however, because the original ordinance was already on the November ballot. Moreover, according to Bryan Dench, who helped draft the amendment's language, the ordinance's supporters were extremely uncomfortable with the changes. "We know they [EPL] wouldn't accept this, because what they wanted was approval of the lifestyle," he said.

Thus, without the amendment, the diocese maintained its neutrality and urged Lewiston's Catholic priests to stay out of the debate, which most did (though four priests went on record in support of the ordinance). Henchal explained the diocese's position in an article published in Lewiston's daily paper shortly before the vote. He wrote that while "the church teaches that all persons are entitled to the exercise of their basic human rights," it was unclear whether the ordinance would "be able to distin-

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guish between [homosexual] orientation, which is not immoral, and [homosexual] behaviors, which are." He added that "the diocese does not judge that this is one of those issues, where the moral principles clearly point to one answer or the other." In conclusion, Henchal encouraged local Catholics "to vote in accord with their [own] judgments."

Despite the neutrality of the diocese and most parish priests, both sides tried hard to show that "The Church" was really on their side. An EPL leaflet, for example, under the heading "Catholic Church Supports Equal Rights for Everyone" quoted the U.S. Catholic bishops' 1976 statement that "homosexual persons, like everyone else, should not suffer from prejudice against their basic human rights." And the leaflet asserted that "while the Catholic church does not tell their faithful how to vote in secular elections, it is clear that the church supports the basic human rights which are the subject of Lewiston's antidiscrimination ordinance." The ordinance's opponents, on the other hand, could refer interested parishioners to the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which concluded that homosexual actions are "intrinsically disordered" and "in no case to be approved of."

The moral distinctions the church insists on between homosexual orientation and "behaviors" or sexual acts make it difficult to assess how the large Catholic presence in Lewiston affected the outcome of the referendum. Celeste Branham, a board member of EPL and dean of students at Lewiston's Bates College, characterized the directions given by the Diocese of Portland as "paradoxical" and confusing. But she doesn't think the church's teaching was the source of the ordinance's defeat. "I don't think we lost to the Catholic church," Branham said. "I think we lost to fear."

Specifically, she referred to "scare tactics" used by the ordinance's opponents, such as ads declaring that if passed, the ordinance could lead to "affirmative action for gays" or the imprisonment of psychologists who speak against homosexuality.

But Paul Madore, the chairman of COLFR (and the founder of its predecessor, ACT), said his group didn't view such ads as scare tactics. He claimed that with ordinances like Lewiston's, an employer with a history of past discrimination against gays could be forced by the courts into a kind of affirmative-action rehiring scheme. And he said that in Canada, those who criticize homosexuality on mental health grounds can be brought to trial for violating that country's hate-crime law. "They call these scare tactics, but we saw them as the next step," Madore said.

Moreover, Madore believes that with or without these ads the ordinance would have been rejected. The town's voters, he said, didn't buy EPL's argument that the ordinance was limited to discrimination only, and that it wouldn't lend a stamp of approval to homosexuality. "The law, as it was written, had a great deal of bite in it," Madore said. "That is the element that ignited the kind of opposition that the gay rights movement incurred in Lewiston." Madore insisted, however, that he and other Catholics in town have no ill will toward homosexuals. He added, "I think that the response that any practicing Catholic would have toward a homosexual would be a charitable response."

Charity aside, Madore and his group are clearly emboldened by the success of their repeal effort. "The gay-rights movement has suffered a significant defeat here in Lewiston," he said. "I think that the state legislators in Augusta who had thought that Maine was ripe for a gay-rights law will be compelled by the results in Lewiston to reconsider." Celeste Branham of EPL, in turn, said that her group will have to focus on nonlegislative strategies to achieve its aims. Her group plans to approach organizations such as the Chamber of Commerce and the local landlords' association, asking them to adopt nondiscrimination policies.

Meanwhile, life in Lewiston goes on. Don Plourde, one of the few local gays to speak publicly in support of the ordinance, now speaks about leaving town. "After all that's happened here, I'm thinking of moving to Portland," he said upon closing up for the night the office of the Androscoggin Valley AIDS Coalition (AVAC), hidden in an unassuming, weathered row house just outside of downtown. Plourde, who is president of the coalition and himself suffers from AIDS, said he had returned to Lewiston only two years ago, after a twenty-three-year absence, because of the illness. "The rent was cheap and I could afford it," he said. □

James Kales, a graduate of the Kennedy School of Government, lives in Brighton, Massachusetts.

DISPUTED QUESTIONS

ON THE AIR NO ROOM FOR DIALOGUE

James L. Nash

Ever since Vatican II, Roman Catholic theologians have been encouraged to enter into a friendly dialogue with the world. In my own field of moral theology this dialogue has usually meant that when discussing ethical issues Catholic thinkers have sought above all to find common ground with their secular conversation partners. This trend reached a kind of culmination during the 1970s debate about whether or not there is a distinctively Christian ethic. The dominant position, supported by such theologians as Charles Curran and Joseph Fuchs, was that there is no distinctively Christian ethic; these writers did concede that the Christian tradition provides unique motivational sources for moral action.

I recently had an experience which has confirmed my growing skepticism about this post-Vatican II approach to dialogue with the world. I have now come to believe that for fruitful public discourse to be possible between church and world, attention to the fundamental differences of the conversation partners is a critical first step. As John Courtney Murray wrote, "disagreement is not an easy thing to reach."

Last February, in the wake of the gays-in-the-military controversy, I was invited to participate on National Public Radio's

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"Talk of the Nation." The program, which aired over NPR for four days from February 8-11, was titled "Gay/Straight Dialogue" and its purpose was to discuss the role of homosexuals and lesbians in American society. The panel consisted of a lesbian activist, a homosexual author, a "straight" journalist, and myself—a moral theologian teaching at The Catholic University of America.

At the time, I supposed I had been invited to serve as a representative of the religious community. I told the producers that I felt uncomfortable in this role, and suggested they invite an additional panelist to represent the conservative or fundamentalist Protestant point of view. I made this suggestion in part for self-serving reasons: I wanted to be able to appear as a moderate "voice of reason" within the religious community, and I thought this might be easier if I were flanked by an outspoken member of the Religious Right. But I also thought it was important that this point of view be represented because it is numerically and thus politically significant.

In any event, the show's producers refused to invite such a panelist because of practical concerns about a five-member panel and because of the judgment that members of the Religious Right are not truly interested in dialogue. I told the producers I thought it strange and unfortunate that they would choose to exclude from the conversation a representative from a community which is such a significant, however irksome, participant in the public conversation about the place of homosexuals in American society. I did not suspect that by the end of the program I would discover a certain sympathy for the Christian Right.

What interests me above all about the issue of homosexuality is the kind of *questions* it raises for a contemporary effort to appropriate the Christian tradition; personally, I have far more questions than answers. Perhaps the most fundamental question is, what are we doing when we make love with another person? Beyond this are many specific questions about homosexuality: Is it possible to explain why a heterosexual orientation is normatively superior to a homosexual one? Are homosexual acts more "intrinsically disordered" than heterosexual contraceptive sex? If there is often no real moral choice involved in a sexual orientation is it just to require perpetual celibacy of all those who have a homosexual orientation? How is the Bible's approach to homosexual acts (and persons) to be interpreted?

I looked forward to discussing these and other questions about homosexuality because I am not fully satisfied with the answers offered by either the revisionist or traditional partisans in contemporary moral theology. On the NPR program, however, none of these questions received extended attention.

In one of the first programs, I began to stake out what I hoped would be common ground, a "staging area" for further exploration, by asking if the other panelists accepted the value of fidelity in sexual intimacy, no matter what the orientation of the partners. My lesbian conversation partner declared that she regarded sexual fidelity as an alien value which heterosexuals, especially male heterosexuals, were unjustly and oppressively

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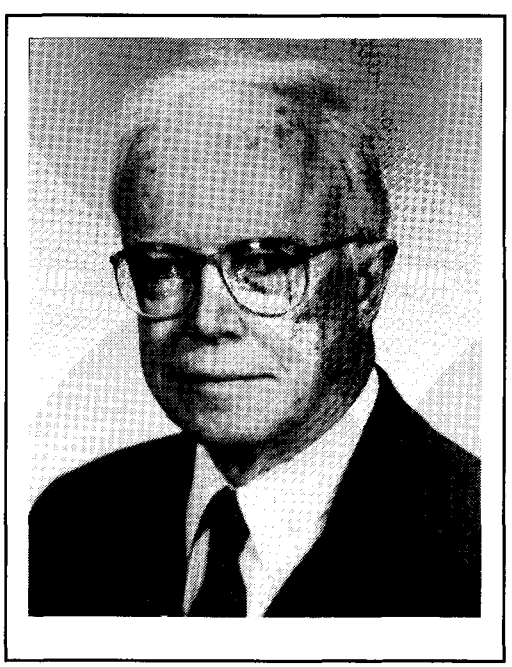

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seeking to impose on her. Moreover, she argued that by holding sexual promiscuity to be somehow morally inferior to fidelity, I was adopting a position which was tantamount to homophobia. Naturally I resisted her presupposition that gay people are more promiscuous than straight folk, and that therefore my position entailed an antigay prejudice. She disagreed. End of conversation.

The homosexual author made an argument which was simply positivistic: all people—gay or straight—engage in all types of sexual activity. Promiscuous sex is no better or worse than faithful sex: "it's just different," a part of being a human sexual animal. End of conversation.

The producers opened the second program with a tape recording of gay people expressing the pleasures of anonymous sex. One speaker challenged the liberal view that gay people should be tolerated because they are "just like straight people." On the contrary, the speaker argued, gay people are different. They do in fact engage more in anonymous sexual activity, and they demand to be accepted as they are, in their difference. There was also a tape of a young man who claimed his sexual experiences in bath houses were "religious," although he laughingly conceded this may be simply because he was "on his knees." As the religious panelist I was asked to comment. This time I was the one who wanted to end the conversation.

After two days of this I told the producers that I felt I had nothing to contribute to this "dialogue" and did not wish to continue on the program. But the producers had received some angry telephone calls after the previous program and said they planned to respond to the criticism. They encouraged me to express my misgivings on the air. Reluctantly, I consented.

I stated on the air that I was beginning to believe that I did not agree with the other panelists enough even to argue with them. I objected to the way religious traditions were being either ignored or belittled on the program, and I argued that what I took to be fundamental moral questions were not being addressed. As an example, I cited the moral distinction between homosexual orientation and homosexual behavior, a distinction that I presumed would be open to differing views and ought to be discussed, perhaps in the light of religious faith. But the gay and lesbian panelists took for granted the moral acceptability of both the orientation and the lifestyle, and the lesbian participant was not interested in even discussing these issues. Simply to ask questions about the normative nature of homosexual activity or orientation was taken to be offensive. The preference of my copanelists was to talk instead about the injustice of all discrimination against gay people, what its causes are, and how to stop it.

While I agreed these were serious problems, I also suggested that any dialogue about the role of homosexuals in American society must take up the biblical witness, as this source continues to form and inform the attitudes of millions of Americans. I argued that this was especially important since the Bible is such a rich text and biblical interpretation is a complex task. I wanted to counter the impression sometimes given by the Religious Right who misuse the Bible in a simplistic way to condemn homosexual persons.

My lesbian conversation partner did not believe dialogue about the Bible was possible because of its use to oppress and dehumanize gay people. Both the gay and the lesbian panelists refused to discuss the Christian or Catholic approach to homosexuality, claiming that because of religious pluralism in the United States, reference to the Christian tradition was problematic and useless. One mentioned that several American Indian religions have favorable attitudes toward homosexuality and that we should discuss those religions, not Christianity; the other claimed that religion is too divisive to be allowed into public conversation at all. End of conversation.

I have drawn a number of conclusions from my radio experience. I felt a surprising amount of anger and frustration that there was no real discussion about the connections between the Christian tradition and the moral issues raised by homosexual activity. To speak about the role of homosexuals in American society without at least discussing the Christian religious tradition is simply absurd. The alienation I experienced at the way religion was excluded from this public dialogue planted within me a subversive seed of sympathy for the attitudes of some on the Christian Right. In the future, do I want to participate in a public forum where my own deepest religious convictions and critical moral *questions* will not even be *discussed*? The whole enterprise seemed like a sham, and I felt inauthentic for participating.

Just as increasing religious pluralism is used as a justification to remove religious conviction from public discourse, our growing moral pluralism also serves to prevent substantive discussion about fundamental moral issues. For example, how to evaluate homosexual acts morally is a question I regard as indispensable. But my dialogue partner may think that even to *ask* this question is offensive and oppressive. I am fully aware that the gay members of the panel may have felt just as angry and frustrated as I did.

I am not claiming that there is no possibility for dialogue about substantive moral issues between people of different faiths. I am questioning the presumption that there is enough common ground among the various groups in our culture that genuine dialogue is going to take place whenever we sit down and talk to each other.

Therefore, given the limits of secular rational discourse, if one still wishes to pursue dialogue with those outside of a tradition of faith, perhaps it is important to pay attention first to what is distinctive about Christian belief. What are the questions one regards as critical or unacceptable? What sources are to be used or excluded? What presuppositions are fundamental? This will enable the dialogue partners to ascertain whether or not they share enough common ground to engage in fruitful dialogue, and on what terms.

I am left with the consolation of reading Stephen Carter's *The Culture of Disbelief* (Basic Books), and with the conviction that my old teacher Richard Bernstein was correct about the contemporary triumph of mere instrumental rationality: increasingly, the members of this culture do not seem to share a faith in the possibility of reasoned deliberation about the ends

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and norms that ought to rule our lives. Therefore I also worry about how to retain my faith in practical reason.

This experience also suggests something I believe the Gospels record as characterizing the end of Jesus' life: there is a limit to what rational conversation can achieve. It is counterintuitive to an academic like myself, and no doubt to the readers of *Commonweal* as well, but I have come to believe there are limits to the utility of discourse, and these limits may be growing in our current culture. In an increasing number of contexts there are times when it is more honest to remain silent, or not to show up at all. □

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DEBATE & DISCERNMENT SCRIPTURE & THE SPIRIT

Luke Timothy Johnson

Homosexuality as an issue internal to the life of the church poses a fundamental challenge not only to moral discernment and pastoral care (the two aspects touched on in the recent *Catechism of the Catholic Church*) but to the self-understanding of the church as at once inclusive ("catholic") and separate ("holy"). The question is not only how we feel or think or act concerning homosexuality, but also how those feelings, thoughts, and actions relate to the canonical texts which we take as normative for our lives together. Homosexuality in the church presents a hermeneutical problem.

The present essay has the modest goal of clearing some space for debate and discernment by setting out what seem to be appropriate boundary markers for what promises to be a long and difficult discussion. I proceed by staking out three basic premises concerning ecclesial hermeneutics, and then a number of theses pertinent to the issue of homosexuality.

I take it as a given, first, that any process of discernment within the church takes as its fundamental framework the Irenaean triad of ecclesial self-definition: the canon of Scripture, the rule of faith, and the teaching authority of bishops. To step outside this framework is to shift the debate to other grounds entirely. Conservatism in commitment to canon, creed, and council is paradoxically the necessary condition for genuine freedom in scriptural interpretation.

Second, I take it as basic that hermeneutics involves the complex task of negotiating normative texts and continuing human experiences. Within the faith community, this means an openness to the ways in which God's revelation continues in human experience as well as a deep commitment to the conviction that such revelation, while often, at first, perceived as dissonant with the symbols of Scripture, will, by God's grace directing human fidelity, be seen as consonant with those symbols and God's own fidelity. Essentially, however, the call of faith is to the living God whose revelation continues, rather than to *our previous understanding* of the texts. Faith in the living God seeks understanding; theological understanding does not define faith or the living God.

My third premise is that Scripture does not characteristically speak with a single voice. Rather, as an anthology of compositions it contains an irreducible and precious pluralism of "voices," shaped by literary genre, theme, and perspective. The *authority* of these texts, furthermore, is most properly distinguished in terms of their function. Their highest authority is found in their capacity to reliably "author" Christian identity. Almost as important is the way in which these texts "authorize" a certain freedom in interpretation, by presenting a model of how Torah was reinterpreted in the light of new experiences. A third sort of authority is important but not as fundamental. The Scripture contains a wide range of "authorities" in the sense of *auctoritates*, or "opinions," not on all the subjects we could desire, but on many of great significance. Responsible hermeneutics claims the "freedom of the children of God" authorized by the New Testament, and seeks to negotiate the various "voices/authorities" within the texts in an effort to conform to that "mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16) that is the authentic form of Christian identity which those texts are, through the power of the Holy Spirit, capable of "authoring."

I would like to think that these three premises, though perhaps nontraditional in formulation, are in essence profoundly Catholic, fairly and accurately representing not only the implications of the New Testament's own origin and canonization, but also of much loyal and creative interpretation within the tradition.

Before moving to the specific case of homosexuality, it might be helpful to amplify slightly two aspects of these premises which without explication might appear careless if not cavalier. The first concerns the experience of God in human lives. Nothing could be more offensive than to challenge tradition on the basis of casual or unexamined experience, as though God's revelation were obvious or easy, or reducible to popularity polls. The call to the discernment of human experience is not a call to carelessness, but its opposite; it is a call to the rigorous asceticism of attentiveness. I repeat: an appeal to some populist claim such as "everyone does it," or "surveys indicate" is theologically meaningless. What counts is whether *God* is up to something in human lives. Discernment of experience in this sense is for the detection of good news in surprising places, not for the disguising of old sins in novel faces.

Yet it is important to assert that God *does*, on the record, act in surprising and unanticipated ways, and upsets human perceptions of God's scriptural precedents. The most fundamental instance for the very existence of Christianity is the unexpected, crucified, and raised Messiah, Jesus. A considerable amount of what we call the New Testament derives from the attempt to resolve the cognitive dissonance between the ex-

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perience of Jesus as the source of God's Holy Spirit, and the text of Torah that disqualifies him from that role, since, "cursed be every one that hangs upon a tree" (Deut. 23:21; *see* Gal. 3:13).

Another example is the spread of the gospel to the Gentiles. It is easy for us at this distance, and with little understanding of the importance of the body language of table fellowship, to take for granted such a breaking of precedent that allowed Gentiles to share fully in the life of the Messianic community without being circumcised or practicing observance of Torah. Good for us, also, therefore, to read Acts 10-15 to see just how agonizing and difficult a task it was for that first generation of Christians to allow their perception of God's activity to change their perceptions, and use that new experience as the basis for reinterpreting Scripture.

The second aspect of the premises I want to amplify slightly is the requirement for responsible hermeneutics to take every voice of Scripture seriously. I spoke of the *auctoritates* as diverse and sometimes contradictory. But every ecclesial decision to live by one rather than another of these voices, to privilege one over another, to suppress one in order to live by another, must be willing to state the grounds of that decision, and demonstrate how the experience of God and the more fundamental principles of "the mind of Christ" and "freedom of the children of God" (principles also rooted in the authority of the text) legitimate the distance between ecclesial decision and a clear statement of Scripture. Do we allow divorce (even if we don't openly call it that) when Jesus forbade it? We must be willing to support our decision by an appeal, not simply to changing circumstances, but to a deeper wisdom given by the Spirit into the meaning of human covenant, and therefore a better understanding of the sayings of Jesus. This is never easy. It is sometimes—as in the case of taking oaths and vows—not even possible. But it is the task of responsible ecclesial hermeneutics.

How does this approach provide a context for the hermeneutics of homosexuality? First, it cautions us against trying to suppress biblical texts which condemn homosexual behavior (Lev. 18:22; Wisd. 14:26; Rom. 1:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:9) or to make them say something other than what they say. I think it fair to conclude that early Christianity knew about homosexuality as it was practiced in Greco-Roman culture, shared Judaism's association of it with the "abominations" of idolatry, and regarded it as incompatible with life in the Kingdom of God. These *auctoritates* emphatically define homosexuality as a vice, and they cannot simply be dismissed.

Second, however, Scripture itself "authorizes" us to exercise the freedom of the children of God in our interpretation of such passages. We are freed, for example, to evaluate the relative paucity of such condemnations. Compared to the extensive and detailed condemnation of economic oppression at virtually every level of tradition, the off-handed rejection of homosexuality appears instinctive and relatively unreflective. We are freed as well to assess the contexts of the condemnations: the rejection of homosexuality, as of other sexual sins, is connected to the incompatibility of *porneia* with life in the Kingdom. We can further observe that the flat rejection of *porneia* (any form of sexual immorality) is more frequent and general than any of its specific manifestations. We are freed, finally, to consider the grounds on which the texts seem to include homosexuality within *porneia*, namely that it is "against nature," an abomination offensive to God's created order.

Such considerations, in turn, provide an opening for a conversation between our human experience (including our religious experience) and the texts of our tradition. Does our experience now support or challenge the assumption that homosexuality is, simply and without exception, an "offense against nature"? Leviticus and Paul considered homosexuality a vice because they assumed it was a deliberate choice that "suppressed the truth about God." Is that a fair assessment of homosexuality as we have come to understand it? It is, of course, grossly distorting to even talk about "homosexuality" as though one clearly definable thing were meant. But many of us who have gay and lesbian friends and relatives have arrived with them at the opposite conclusion: for many persons the acceptance of their homosexuality *is* an acceptance of creation as it applies to them. It is emphatically *not* a vice that is chosen. If this conclusion is correct, what is the hermeneutical implication?

Another order of questions concerns the connection of homosexuality to *porneia*. The church, it is clear, cannot accept *porneia*. But what is the essence of "sexual immorality"? Is the moral quality of sexual behavior defined biologically in terms of the use of certain body parts, or is it defined in terms of personal commitment and attitudes? Is not *porneia* essentially sexual activity that ruptures covenant, just as *castitas* is sexual virtue within or outside marriage because it is sexuality in service to covenant?

If sexual virtue and vice are defined covenantally rather than biologically, then it is possible to place homosexual and heterosexual activity in the same context. Certainly, the church must reject the *porneia* which glorifies sex for its own sake, indulges in promiscuity, destroys the bonds of commitment, and seduces the innocent. Insofar as a "gay life style" has these connotations, the church must emphatically and always say "no" to it. But the church must say "no" with equal emphasis to the heterosexual "*Playboy/Cosmo* lifestyle" version. In both cases, also, the church can acknowledge that human sexual activity, while of real and great significance, is not wholly determinative of human existence or worth, and can perhaps begin to ask whether the church's concentration on sexual behavior corresponds proportionally to the modest emphasis placed by Scripture.

The harder question, of course, is whether the church can recognize the possibility of homosexual committed and covenantal love, in the way that it recognizes such sexual/personal love in the sacrament of marriage. This is a harder question because it pertains not simply to moral attitudes or pastoral care, but to the social symbolization of the community. The issue here is analogous to the one facing earliest Christianity

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after Gentiles started being converted. Granted that they had been given the Holy Spirit, could they be accepted into the people of God just as they were, or must they first "become Jewish" by being circumcised and obeying all the ritual demands of Torah? Remember, please, the stakes: the Gentiles were "by nature" unclean, and were "by practice" polluted by idolatry. We are obsessed by the sexual dimensions of the body. The first-century Mediterranean world was obsessed by the social implications of food and table-fellowship. The decision to let the Gentiles in "as is" and to establish a more inclusive form of table-fellowship, we should note, came into direct conflict with the accepted interpretation of Torah and what God wanted of humans.

The decision, furthermore, was not easy to reach. Paul's Letter to the Galatians suggests some of the conflict it generated. Even the irenic Luke devotes five full chapters of Acts (10-15) to the account of how the community caught up with God's intentions, stumbling every step of the way through confusion, doubt, challenge, disagreements, divisions, and debate. Much suffering had to be endured before the implications of Peter's question, "If then God gave the same gift to them as he gave to us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that could withstand God" (Acts 11:17), could be fully answered: "We believe that we [Jews] shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they [Gentiles] will" (Acts 15:11).

The grounds of the church's decision then was the work that God was doing among the Gentiles, bringing them to salvation through faith. On the basis of this experience of God's work, the church made bold to reinterpret Torah, finding there unexpected legitimation for its fidelity to God's surprising ways (Acts 15:15-18). How was that work of God made known to the church? Through the narratives of faith related by Paul and Barnabas and Peter, their personal testimony of how "signs and wonders" had been worked among the Gentiles (Acts 15:4, 6-11, 12-13).

Such witness is what the church now needs from homosexual Christians. Are homosexuality and holiness of life compatible? Is homosexual covenantal love according to "the mind of Christ," an authentic realization of that Christian identity authored by the Holy Spirit, and therefore "authored" as well by the Scripture despite the "authorities" speaking against it? The church can discern this only on the basis of faithful witness. The burden of proof required to overturn scriptural precedents is heavy, but it is a burden that has been borne before. The church cannot, should not, define itself in response to political pressure or popularity polls. But it is called to discern the work of God in human lives and adapt its self-understanding in response to the work of God. Inclusivity must follow from evidence of holiness; are there narratives of homosexual holiness to which we must begin to listen? □

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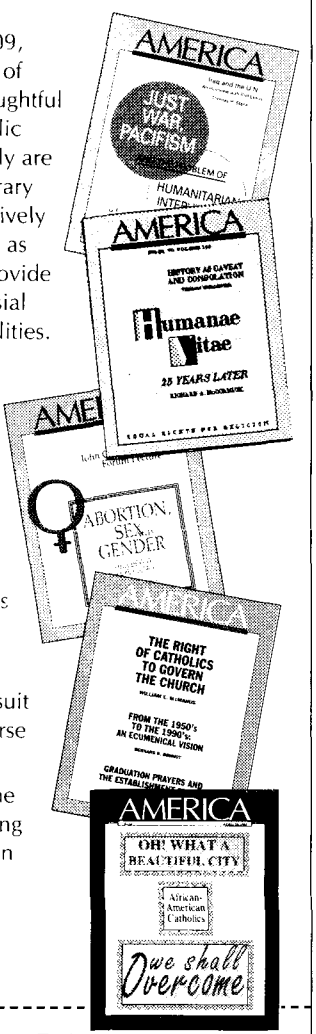

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DISPUTED QUESTIONS

HOW BIG IS THE TABLE? CHOICE & SEXUALITY

Dennis O'Brien

"The love that dare not speak its name." In the age of Oprah, can there be anything that remains unspoken? Bruce Bawer's earnest effort to speak for homosexuality ultimately demonstrates the frustration—perhaps the inevitable frustration—of the task. As Bawer notes, "homosexual" sounds too clinical, "gay" seems to be a political statement. "Queer" is a term of opprobrium—unless it is Queer Nation parading Gay Pride. And, if "homophobia" is the opponent, the nature of the fear remains unspecified.

I raise these rather superficial naming issues because I have no great faith that we have a current public language to discuss homosexuality in terms which finally illuminate. (I am not much more optimistic about discussing sexuality in general; homosexuality is just a particularly vexing matter.) My lack of confidence in reaching rational discourse and sexual wisdom is made more profound by the quality of Bruce Bawer's effort. *A Place at the Table* is a balanced, nonpolemic case for full acceptance of homosexuality by society. It is not a case for simple tolerance; Bawer, a political conservative and practicing Christian, hopes for the institutionalization of stable homosexual partnerships in marriages recognized by church and state. Homosexual marriage is seen as a check on the morally destructive excesses of the subculture of bars, bathhouses, and one-night stands that is often defined and championed as the definitive gay "life-style." *A Place at the Table* is unusual in the catalogue of commentaries on homosexuality in condemning not only "homophobia," but also the radical sexual politics of what Bawer calls the "gay subculture."

Because of the sobriety of Bawer's book and the obvious anguish from which it is written, it deserves a more complex answer than a short review allows. However, there are some deep issues that simply must be addressed in any discussion of sexual life. The most salient for Bawer's argument is *choice*. It is crucial to most arguments for tolerance or acceptance of homosexuality that sexual orientation is given, not chosen. Bawer restates this claim repeatedly:

> One can approve or disapprove of somebody's actions, opinions, beliefs; but it is meaningless to speak of approving or disapproving of another's innate characteristics. To say that someone approves or disapproves of somebody's homosexuality is comparable to saying that one approves or disapproves of somebody's baldness or tallness.

There are two crucial questions to be raised: Is homosexuality genetically innate (like tallness) and, even if it is genetically innate, does that necessarily remove it from evaluation?

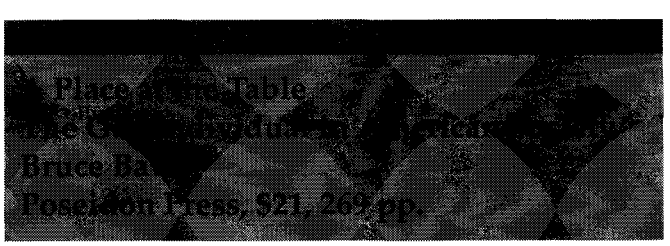
The claim that sexual identity occurs "by nature" is often stated; it is a mainstay of conservative heterosexual critiques of homosexuality and homosexual apologists. To critics, heterosexuality is by nature, homosexuality is "unnatural" and perverse. Gay apologists accept the general point about "nature" but claim that homosexuality is also by nature—maybe even from a homosexual gene. I find the view that sexual orientation is "natural" unpersuasive. Bawer offers no real "proof" that homosexuality is "by nature," rather he insists that others respect the *feeling* of homosexuals that their sexual direction is given, a necessary compulsion.

I have no doubt that many homosexuals *feel* that their sexual direction is a "natural" compulsion, but such a claim seems to fly in the face of the manifest plasticity of human behavior. Humans have been properly characterized as the most sexual of all animals because of the detachment of our sexual drives from the periodic biologic triggers which dominate the animal kingdom. We have a repertoire of sexual fashions, fantasies, and fetishes that wildly transcends nature's rather restrictive procreative interests. It seems to me that Freud was basically correct in defining human sexuality as "polymorphous." Sexual orientation is one of the complex ways in which the human spirit attempts to deal with the messy confusion of being in a body.

If Freud's polymorphous view is correct, does this mean that mature homosexuals like Bruce Bawer could be/should be urged to "choose" the socially dominant/morally correct(?) heterosexual orientation? Probably not. If homosexuality is not "first nature," one suspects that in many cases it is "second nature": a habit of being-in-a-body that is as compulsive in its way as a genetic urge. If one is a critic of homosexuality, one might liken it to an "addiction"—a deeply ingrained habit which may be near impossible to change. If one is a defender (and not committed to the "by nature" view), it might be likened to a "call," a sort of sexual vocation. (Bawer notes that "coming out" stories in the gay community read much like Christian conversion tales. Being "called" conveys the sense of inescapable destiny claimed by homosexuals.)

I am not happy with either "addiction" or "vocation." Addiction sounds too destructive to comprehend committed and loving homosexual unions. "Vocation" may be better, but to be usable one would need an extensive discussion of the vocation of sexuality in general. To what are we called in our sexual life? To answer that question one would need a phenomenology of sexual response and interaction that is largely unavailable.

Let me turn to the second salient claim. Suppose one admits that homosexuality is natural, first nature, in the genes—what



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does that prove? I start from a position of "radical freedom": nothing in nature comes with a value label pro or con or neutral. Human beings have to decide how to value what nature offers. As Adam names the beasts of Paradise, so we get to name the beasts of our psyche and natural endowment. No matter how fixed and inescapable the facts of nature, we may choose a life-stance which accepts, rejects, or ignores the "given." Dylan Thomas urges his dying father to "rage against the dying of the light." If someone considers such advice "irrational," it is because he/she has placed death in the neutral category: a fact of life to be ignored, *carpe diem*.

I submit, then, that even if sexual direction is a natural endowment, that fact alone fails to settle ultimate value. The argument requires an elaborate middle term justifying our human ways with sexuality. Such an argument, note, applies equally to a supposed heterosexual "natural" tendency. It should not come as a surprise to Christians and Buddhists that free sexual activity is not necessarily regarded as necessary or the "best" choice in life. If celibacy is a morally viable option, it cannot be the case that sexual expression of any sort is a necessary condition of health and the good life. It is at least theoretically possible, then, to regard sexuality (either kind) as a natural curse to be transcended. As ancient Cephalus says to Socrates in the *Republic*, age has finally freed him from that raging beast.

Celibacy or even moderate sexual restraint is not currently fashionable; an active sex life of personal choice is advised on all sides as the key to happiness—often as the *only* happiness. Maybe so, but one does long for some deeper justification of this pop-cultural claim than is articulated on the talk-show circuit. One of the virtues (in my mind, at least) of Bawer's critique of the homosexual subculture is his rejection of the slogan "Everything I do is gay"—as if sexuality were the sole key to life and value.

I have, however, some sympathy for subculture apologists who want to move homosexuality from the neutral-by-nature to the chosen-by-culture category. I don't agree with the culture that they advocate, but at least they want to insist that this sexual "vocation" has a valuational perspective. Bawer quotes (unfavorably) Donna Minkowitz's claim that gay culture "threaten[s] the family, male domination, and the Calvinist ethic of work and grimness that has paralyzed most Americans' search for pleasure." She goes on to agree with Pat Buchanan that the gay rights movement is a "cultural war for the soul of America."

Minkowitz takes the issue of "choice" to the proper place. I suspect that many adult homosexuals have no real "choice" about their sexual direction; it is at least second nature to them and it is not clear that a committed "monogamous" homosexual relation is such a dire social spectacle that it cannot be tolerated and even valued. The choice issue is not with individuals, it is with the culture and social institutions.

Let us suppose that the issue for the culture is one of sexual vocation. To what are our children to be called in their sex-

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ual life? As with all life's large and lesser callings, the culture and its institutional structures will offer counsel and clues. Assume for the sake of argument that sexual orientation emerges from and within culture out of the polymorphous urges of our basic biology: should there be cultural cues commending one or the other sexual orientation and/or sexual life style? Unless one is convinced, as Bawer seems to be, that there is an absolute dichotomy between the born homosexual and the heterosexual, it would seem an appropriate question for parents to address in forming the sexual habits of their children. To be sure, the origins of sexual orientation are obscure, but if one knew the pedagogy of sexual habituation, are there reasons for pursuing heterosexual habits or do they lead inevitably to Minkowitz's "sad" relationships?

To be sure, that is a big "if" in the above argument. Sex and child rearing are muddled enough that children may emerge homosexual no matter what. Nevertheless, whatever the confused character of child rearing in family, school, and society, it does not seem inappropriate to continue to commend a heterosexual calling to the young. What worries (rational) critics of the gay movement, is the claim that sexual orientation is destined and/or indifferent. Bawer opens his book with an incident in which he observes a teen-ager surreptitiously leafing through gay magazines at a newsstand. He sympathizes with the youngster who, he assumes, must be homosexual and is struggling with how to "come out." My own view is that sexual confusion is at least as common in the young as suppressed homosexuality. Bawer seems committed to canonizing the first curiosity.

Bawer ends his book with a fervent plea for recognizing homosexual marriage. How far can a committed homosexual relation conform to the meaning of marriage? Under the individualistic, contractarian assumptions of modern "marriage," there may be no great problem. If marriage creates a legal space for "couples," sexual orientation may not be important. If one resists homosexual "marriage," it must involve the cultural symbolism of marriage—and the law is, for better or worse, also a cultural symbol. Culture is acquired, what we do *not* get from nature: the education of each generation. In the sexual acculturation of succeeding generations, are homosexual and heterosexual unions to be regarded as equi-valued?

Several years ago, John Garvey wrote in *Commonweal* an eloquent defense of celibacy. He pointed out that most of the arguments used to defend this odd life-choice were specious. Celibacy is a kind of fast for a spiritual purpose but it gets defended as if fasting was a way of staying thin. George Bernard Shaw characterized marriage as "the most licentious of all human institutions"; I suppose that might serve as a commendation in the present age. The vow of celibacy—and the vow of marriage—witness to a larger life than can be justified or understood by the individualistic assumptions of contemporary society. I would argue that heterosexual marriage *as a cultural institution* (not necessarily in its obvious historical flaws and failures) has a special, larger-than-life meaning that cannot be captured even by loving, stable homosexual couples. Heterosexual marriage connects the couple to humanity's longest saga, connects to the family from which every homosexual emerges but to which he does not finally return, connects back as symbol to the ultimate fecundity of nature. Heterosexual marriage as a cultural symbol is larger than a life which is just *mine* (and thine).

The loving commitment of gay couples, often so poignantly carried forward in selfless devotion to a lover stricken with AIDS, is not to be cast aside as mere perversity and sin. Nevertheless, heterosexuality, I believe, symbolizes a larger, perhaps even a darker and more mysterious scenario of humankind. As Luce Irigary says in *An Ethics of Sexual Difference*, "man and woman, woman and man are always meeting as though for the first time because they cannot be substituted for one another." It is Adam and Eve again in every age and day. Homosexuality, despite the tragedy of AIDS, may really be "gay"; heterosexuality expresses a wonderment, a tension in difference, that eludes or transcends the simple gaiety of sex. It is in that deep story that our sexualities must be ultimately assessed. □

Dennis O'Brien is president of the University of Rochester, and author of God and the New Haven Railway *(Beacon).*

Charles Edward Eaton

The Pond

Do you remember those days we went fishing in
the pond,
Wore cut-off jeans, no underwear,
Drank cola in the sun, and did not think
that we must share
With anyone a having to ourselves the Great Beyond?

This is a focus filled with jeweled light—
We stripped, tanned beneath its magnifying glass,
Felt the prism in the blood, the rainbows pass,
Their colors, like a dance of seven veils, unite.

For naked boys, the shimmering gauze—
I take some comfort that it comes to me
so late
The most alive of us can lie in state
And break the rigid pattern of eternal laws.

I smile to see the old man in the mirror
As though he saw the pond in morning glow,
And knows in unforgotten places time is very slow,
Waits in grave attendance at the edges of an error.

An error with the most imposing truth in it—
A jeweled ring that dazzles on my finger
The rich, belabored dance of those who linger
Yields as little to attendance as those edges
still permit.

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DISPUTED QUESTIONS

AN INCARNATIONAL ETHIC LISTENING TO ONE ANOTHER

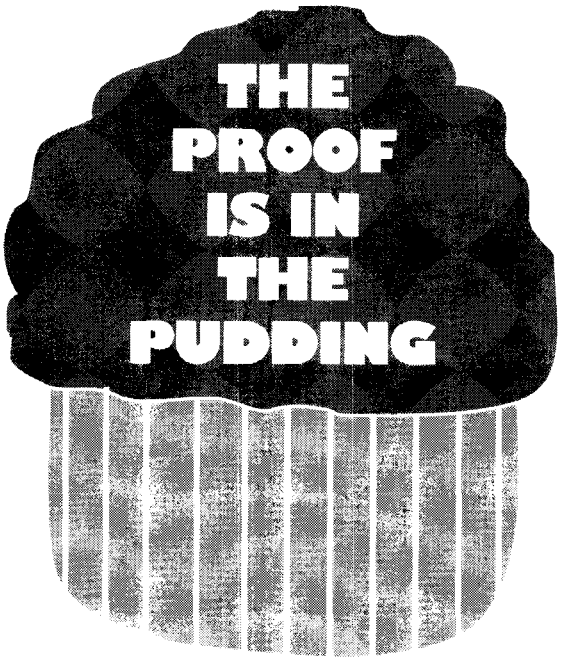
Paul Baumann

Sex, as John S. Dunne has written, is initially "experienced as a terrible purpose at work in one's life, a purpose that is not personal but somehow impersonal in its aims." Dunne continues: "We fear both our sexuality and our mortality for the same reasons, it seems, because they are forces within us that drive beyond all personal goals, that threaten our personal existence by leading beyond it" (*Time and Myth*, 1973). Sex retains that numinous quality, the mixture of fascination and dread, until we develop what Dunne calls a "relationship" to our sexuality, a way of "being a man, or being a woman," that mediates that impersonal, terrible purpose.

One suspects that most people, regardless of what they think about the moral or theological status of homosexuality, recognize the abiding truth of Dunne's description. Presumably this experience is much the same for heterosexuals and homosexuals. The search for love, for that person who in her or his gift of self returns us to our own, truest self, usually constitutes the central drama of our lives. How perplexing that the force compelling us toward our most intimate and meaningful encounters seems so opaque to rational inquiry, so fraught with moral ambiguity.

That seems especially true when trying to judge the moral and religious status of homosexuality. One school of thought dismisses traditional Catholic objections to homosexuality as mere prejudice and self-deluding irrationality. Christians should encourage loving, monogamous relationships however they are incarnated. Homosexuality, the argument goes, is a fact of life—even an incontrovertible datum of "nature"—and it is unjust to discriminate against people who are, through no fault of their own, "born that way." Isn't the important thing how people treat and love one another, not what they do in bed?

This demand for justice and moral parity is powerful, especially at a time when the homosexual community has been devastated by the AIDS epidemic. But if that demand is resisted, as it has been even in churches more liberal on questions of sexual morality than Catholicism, it is not necessarily because of small-mindedness or irrational bias. Clearly, for the church the full social and moral enfranchisement of homosexuality is a profound challenge to any coherent notion of the meaning of revelation or the authority of tradition. Luke Timothy Johnson, in this issue (page 11), suggests that the warrant for such a reversal of traditional Christian sanctions against homosexuality might be seen in the similar upheaval caused by Paul's extension to the Gentiles of the promises once made exclusively to Israel. Even if one finds this analogy a bit slippery, it probably gets the proportions of the challenge about right.



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"Here's the mistake, sir—you added apples and oranges."

How we frame the question is crucial. Appeals to "experience" or "the signs of the times" will not suffice, for the experience or the signs read by those on one side of the argument tend to cancel out those on the other side. Moreover, appeals to an inarticulate sense of either the rightness or wrongness of homosexuality are hardly unmediated testimony. Just as the "homophobia" of past and present can be linked to specific social and cultural contexts and interests, so too can the modern demand for sexual emancipation. While this sociological and epistemological fact helps explain our attitudes, it cannot provide us with moral justification. Similarly, as Dennis O'Brien suggests (page 14), even if homosexuality is not a "choice," that does not place it beyond moral valuation. Sexual expression and identity, whether it is homosexual, heterosexual, or something in between, owes as much to culture as to biology, as any examination of its various expressions across disparate cultures readily demonstrates. "The social body constrains the way the physical body is perceived," the anthropologist Mary Douglas has written (*Natural Symbols*, 1970). "The physical experience of the body, always modified by the social categories through which it is known, sustains a particular view of society."

A discussion of this question must begin at a more fundamental level than where demands for equality emerge. We must examine the cosmological presuppositions in which our ideas about the proper use of the body originate. The difference between men and women, even the difference between self and others, is thoroughly implicated in a culture's attitude toward the proper use of sexual organs. It is precisely the ability of sexual acts to blur the boundary between individuals—"and they shall become one flesh"—that creates their power and ambiguity. What is a man and what is a woman, whether like can lie down with like, brother lie down with sister, are classifications that expose the very scaffolding upon which reason itself is built. As the sociologist Eviatar Zerubavel has observed, incest is almost universally regarded as forbidden and polluting because it threatens to destroy the boundary between the self and our surroundings, especially those closest to us (*The Fine Line: Making Distinctions in Everyday Life*, 1991). "As any victim of parental child abuse must know," Zerubavel writes, "such sexual contacts are absolutely detrimental to one's selfhood." According to Zerubavel, such categories though varied are not irrational but "fundamentally cognitive," providing the self with the first building block, the "mental gap," that allows us to detach ourselves from others and establish a distinct identity. For better or for worse, "a somewhat similar need to avoid blending with 'one's own kind' underlies the homophobic taboo," Zerubavel acknowledges.

For Catholicism, disassembling the cognitive scaffolding that renders homosexuality taboo will attenuate a good many other moral boundaries and distinctions. Whether that is desirable can be debated, but it cannot be ignored. Obviously gender lines and sexual morality have changed a great deal in the last fifty years, and the new openness to homosexuality is as much a sign as a cause of that reality. But whatever accommodation we need to make in justice to help ensure the dignity of homosexual people, the prior question is whether Catholicism should dismantle the moral categories that sustain its particular concepts of gender, the meaning of sexual love, and marriage. The challenge homosexuality presents can be put simply: Catholicism teaches that the conjugal act, by its very nature, both unites man and wife and ties sexual love to procreation. Homosexual acts, by definition and in principle, sever the connection between sexuality and procreation. Can that be reconciled to Catholicism's sacramentalization of sexual love in marriage?

I don't think so. Such a development seems neither likely nor sound. Nor can I envision how it might be made theologically coherent. Incarnational faith, as I hope to expand upon below, has a logical interest in a sexual metaphysics. Paul Ramsey was right about the transcendent implications of sexuality for biblical religion: "To put radically asunder what God joined together in parenthood when he made love procreative...means a refusal of the image of God's creation in our own." Perhaps Luke Timothy Johnson is prescient; our views of homosexuality may prove as provisional as the cultic objections of Jewish-Christians to the Gentiles. But it is difficult to imagine how this transformation might occur. Sexual differentiation and intercourse seem more intractable facts of life than ethnic identity. Gentiles, after all, could become Jews by submitting to circumcision and the Torah. It is much harder to imagine how incarnational religion might accommodate the moral marginalization of procreation.

Working out the theological status of homosexuality begins by making fundamental presuppositions explicit. How exactly, then, do we mirror God's image? That is notorious-

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ly hard to explain. But as Dunne suggests, understanding the meaning of human sexuality at the very least requires that we understand what end, what "beyond," what seemingly "impersonal purpose" sexual life can be seen pointing to, is measured against, or can be understood to be a sign of in any sacramental vision of creation. If we affirm a faith in a personal God who intends a purpose for us and whose creation evinces a design intelligible to reason as well as disclosed by revelation, it is only logical that we see that design manifest in the act that makes us. In other words—and no matter how one views the question of artificial contraception—there remains a teleology to human sexuality, namely its procreative end, that Catholicism is right to emphasize—even if it too often overemphasizes it.

Insisting in principle on the inseparability of the unitive and procreative aspects of sexuality can be seen as a profound realism, one that defends the psychophysical unity of the human person while resisting both biological reductionism and a gnosticizing dualism of spirit and matter. On the other hand, homosexuality in principle renders the connection between sexuality and procreation arbitrary, if not meaningless, in a way even the prudent use of contraception cannot. I suspect that holding on to the ontological truth of procreative sex is behind the deep-seated resistance to homosexual marriage in churches that have little difficulty with the use of contraception, the possibility of divorce, or even abortion.

Dennis O'Brien illuminates this point from a slightly different perspective (page 16): "Heterosexual marriage as a cultural institution...has a special, larger-than-life meaning that cannot be captured even by loving, stable homosexual couples. Heterosexual marriage connects the couple to humanity's longest saga, connects the family from which every homosexual emerges but to which he does not finally return, connects back as symbol to the ultimate fecundity of nature. Heterosexual marriage as a cultural symbol is larger than a life which is just *mine* (and thine)....It is Adam and Eve again in every age and day." Even childless heterosexual couples can be seen to strengthen the symbolic and poetic validity of this "saga"; for every heterosexual marriage, even if its ultimate end is frustrated, remains a sign and symbol of humanity's foundational acts.

True, Catholicism's rigid stance against any and all forms of artificial contraception often buries this essential metaphysical and moral insight, this necessary cultural symbol, under a crude physicalism. But binding sexual feeling to the creation of families and children, and in so doing strengthening the irrevocable covenant between man and woman, remains a great humanizing value, not an archaic superstition.

Discussing the social and ethical implications of this understanding, philosopher Roger Scruton has elucidated concerns raised by a complete relativization of Christianity's traditional procreative ethic. "If children can be made in laboratories, and by methods which bear no relation to the love-making of their parents, what remains of those commitments which tie

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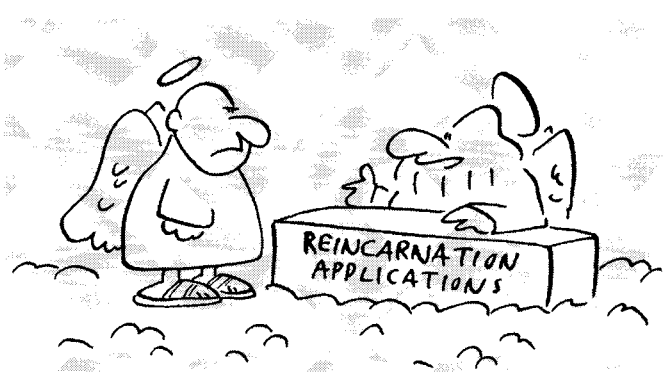
the generations each to each, and give us a motive, in our most urgent ventures towards the Other, to safeguard the world for those who have not yet entered it?" (*The Philosopher on Dover Beach*, 1990).

As Scruton adumbrates, many subtle benefits flow from the biblical vision of love and life that takes our embodiment in two distinct sexes as morally defining. The reciprocal design inherent in creation is of course laid out in Genesis 1:27: "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him, male and female he created them." According to the Bible, sexual differentiation actually partakes of the very mystery and wholeness of God. As Saint Paul writes in Ephesians 5:32, the mystery of the union between man and woman is a sign of the mystery of Christ's relationship to his church.

For incarnational religion the intrinsically nonprocreative nature of homosexual acts is a metaphysical dead-end. In this symbolic or metaphorical context, severing the sexual expression of love from generativity negates the connection between matter and spirit. On this point, Luke Timothy Johnson suggests (page 12) that the Christian understanding of sexual sin is not fundamentally so explicit or concretized, but "defined convenantally rather than biologically." He warns against any reduction of sexual morality to talk of body parts. That is a useful corrective to the kind of extreme physicalism that has made the church's teaching on contraception unpersuasive. Catholicism has certainly been guilty of such a literalism. But agnosticism about the ontological and symbolic character of the sexually differentiated body moves too far in the opposite direction. Positing a severe dichotomy between biology and covenant, body parts and personal commitments, opens too wide a door to subjectivism. The logic that substitutes "commitment" for explicit prohibitions would seem to collapse the tension Catholicism seeks to create between body and spirit. How can the body retain its power as a symbol if sexual acts are rendered merely instrumental? Johnson acknowledges this concern in suggesting that homosexual marriage may be incompatible with the "social symbolization of the community."

Saint Paul, as Johnson points out, was no friend of rigid cultic or moral categories. Still, he insisted that "The body is not meant for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body (1 Cor. 6:13)....Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? (15)....Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (19-20).



"Hey, don't blame me for the long waiting list, blame Planned Parenthood."

As Paul's regard for the body indicates, the God-given purposes of sexuality, even under the freedoms of the new dispensation, are not abrogated. While it is true the gospel relativizes gender differences as well as the command to procreate by judging them and all other things in the "freedom of the children of God," it is equally true that those sexual realities remain part of God's created order. Christians must take a new stance toward the world, but the intrinsic good of creation has not yet passed away. Bodily resurrection implies as much. There may be no giving or taking in marriage in the Kingdom, but presumably those resurrected are men and women, not some third kind of human being. While it is certainly true that Paul used the scandal of the cross and the inclusion of the Gentiles as warrants for innovation, that warrant was not a license to remake what God had done in making humankind male and female.

An ethic that welcomes homosexual acts by elevating relational values over embodied reality is suspect. Classically, the etherealization or overspiritualization of sex characterized the gnostic eagerness to exalt spirit over matter. Catholicism, in its defense of Christ as true God and true man, has eschewed such otherworldly ambitions. Body parts count, and they signify. The mystery of sexual differentiation is fundamental to the appropriation of the biblical story. Karl Barth noted that, like Christ, we cannot transcend gender. Only as gendered creatures do we mysteriously mirror the creator: "That God created man as male and female, and therefore as his image and the likeness of the covenant of Grace, of the relationship between himself and his people, between Christ and his community, is something that can never lead to a neutral It, nor found a purely external, incidental, and transient sexuality, but rather an inward, essential, and lasting order of being as He and She, valid for all time and also for eternity."

Still, the case for eliminating the censure of homosexuality demands serious and respectful attention. The *New Republic*'s Andrew Sullivan, a gay Catholic with a deep regard for the tradition, has written compellingly on the moral and spiritual benefits of gay marriage. He argues that it is hypocritical to complain about the immorality of homosexual people while denying them the social stability and moral encouragement of marriage. In an interview in *America* (May 8, 1993), Sullivan said that "to deny [marriage] to gay people is not merely incoherent and wrong, from the Christian point of view. It is incredibly destructive of the moral quality of their lives in general....You can't ask someone to suppress what makes them whole as a human being and then [expect them] to lead blameless lives. We are human beings, and we need love in our lives in order to love others—in order to be good Christians."

Sullivan also contends that the extension to homosexuals of the right to marry is fundamentally a civil rights issue, and that

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the liberal state's commitment to equality requires that it remain neutral (that is, accommodating) on the question of same-sex marriage (*New Republic*, May 10, 1993).

Homosexuals do suffer harm because of the stigma attached to same-sex love. No Christian can excuse or tolerate hateful behavior. Nor should the church in any way close its doors, its heart, or its helping hand to homosexuals. But, as I hope I have in some way demonstrated, the church's traditional prohibition against homosexual acts is not as morally incoherent as Sullivan suggests. Moreover, Sullivan's ontological assertions are questionable. Ordered toward the "mind of Christ," individual sexual fulfillment has been relativized for homosexuals and heterosexuals alike—we have been bought with a price, our bodies are not our own. For a Christian it is not even the love of one's spouse that makes one ultimately whole, but the love of God. No homosexual Catholic should be without such love, as neither should any heterosexual Catholic. Priests and religious have traditionally forsaken the "right" to sexual expression as a sign of that reality and consolation.

The neutral state, moreover, values equality because it first values other things. As the philosopher Charles Taylor has written, equality depends not on state neutrality or mere freedom of choice, for they cannot justify themselves, but on larger conceptions of what it means to be a human being. Respecting people's individuality and rights contributes to that larger end but cannot be an end in itself. Working for the common good within a democratic state still means working to value some things more than others—a decent provision for all over absolute economic liberty for some, unborn life over a woman's absolute autonomy, two-parent families for children over individual freedom, and, at least traditionally, heterosexual marriage over homosexual relationships. Individual autonomy, even sexual autonomy, is not absolute. As Taylor specifically argues concerning homosexual rights, such an expansion of our notions of human possibility must be measured against a pre-existing "horizon of significance" and must take into account "homo- and heterosexual experience and life" or it risks rendering the meaning of sexuality trivial and thus defeats its own purposes (*The Ethics of Authenticity*, 1992).

Doubtless the "horizon of significance" for secular society and for Catholicism will differ. The neutral state presumably might find it valuable to encourage monogamous same-sex relations. Catholicism's refusal to equate homosexuality and heterosexuality, however, cannot be understood except as the logical flip side of its strong affirmation of the place of procreative sexuality in God's creation and plan of salvation. Incarnational Christianity, after all, is the story of how God became man, spirit became matter, the divine became human. For Catholics this sacralization of flesh, this ultimate commingling of the human and the divine, took place in a woman's body. The relativizing of procreation inherent in the demands for homosexual marriage can be seen as an expression of what Jean Bethke Elshtain suggests is contemporary culture's subtle hostility toward women in their unique capacity to create life. Same-sex marriage, Elshtain wrote in *Commonweal* (November 22, 1991), is "hostile to the regenerative female body and to the symbolism of social regeneration to which this body is necessarily linked and has, historically, given rise."

A reverence—many say an exaggerated reverence—for the natal body is at the center of the Catholic cosmology. Consequently, it is not surprising that the antinatal instinct manifest in same-sex marriage might be viewed with deep suspicion by those who believe God himself was born of a woman. Admittedly, the celebration of woman's unique capacity to create life chafes against the contemporary resistance to the idea that sexual differentiation might entail some cultural expression as well as some distinction in social roles. This is not unrelated to the status of homosexuality. As the philosopher Jeffrey Stout has written, the homophobic taboo is most plausible in cultures where masculine and feminine roles are sharply defined and have a large social significance (*Ethics after Babel*, 1988). Obviously that is less and less the case in modern technological society. Given that fact, contemporary culture, with its conception of equality and individual rights and its view of

E.B. de Vito

Imitation of Art

Who says the real life world
of women, men,
has not been charted,
patterned now and again
by worlds created
by the brush or pen?

The tortoise may outrace,
outstrip the hare
not just in a tale
by Aesop, but elsewhere;

the stronger needs
the weaker one to shift
the weight that by himself,
he cannot lift.

Who says that man
does only what he can
within the certain
limits of a plan,
when every day sees something
new proclaim
how art slips from
its binding and its frame—

directing worlds whose boundaries
bend, extend
to finalities not final—
ends that never end.

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gender as a suspect, if not archaic and superfluous characteristic, cannot make much sense of the church's position on sexual questions. That is why the Catholic abomination of sexual "sin" clashes so loudly with secular culture's abomination of "discrimination."

Already the everyday social and sexual experience of Catholics, not to mention the new technologies of reproduction, reflects less and less the cognitive categories inherent in the biblical story. Yet, dispensing with the moral distinction between heterosexuality and homosexuality would require a profound reimagining, or a good deal of creative retranslating of Scripture and tradition. That may happen. God surprises us, as Luke Johnson says. Catholicism has reversed itself on slavery and usury, among other things. We live between times, after all. In his interview in *America*, Andrew Sullivan quite candidly and appealingly admitted that he could not reconcile his homosexuality with his Catholicism, that he could only try to live with the contradiction. That is honest and intellectually responsible, and a stance that recommends itself to the church as a whole at this point. Yes, there is at least a seeming inconsistency in the church's refusal to condemn homosexual orientation while denying homosexuals the moral right to express that orientation. But one way or another, the church places much the same burden of conscience on the divorced, the widowed, the unmarried, and the contraceptively inclined, even, in a sense, on the preternaturally ambitious, irascible, and acquisitive. And if the final measure is love, success in living virtuous lives surely varies little among heterosexuals and homosexuals. Most of us seem to be in the same boat.

My argument comes down to this. Catholicism's vision of what it means to be a man and what it means to be a woman remains a compelling way for people to mediate the "terrible purpose" of sexuality at work in their lives. We should think long and hard before throwing out the principles behind love- and baby-making with the bath water of changing social and gender roles. No one of plausible authority suggests that homosexuality excludes one from the church. Luke Timothy Johnson offers excellent advice when he writes that it is incumbent upon the church to open itself to "narratives of homosexual holiness." As part of the body of Christ, homosexuals have shaped and will continue to shape that corporate reality for the better. For finally, regardless of which side of this tortuous question we come down on, we must, each one of us, continue to listen. □

Paul Baumann is the associate editor of Commonweal.

SCREEN

YANKED DOWN TO EARTH

ATTENBOROUGH'S C.S. LEWIS

I reviewed the stage play, *Shadowlands*, three years ago (*Crisis*, February 1991), praised it, but issued a warning that I now repeat re Richard Attenborough's film adaptation. "Let devotees of the life and works of Clive Staples 'Jack' Lewis go to...*Shadowlands*...forewarned though not necessarily forearmed. If they go to sniff out omissions and distortions of facts, they will have a field day. But they won't have as good a time as those who attend the play to discover what idea, what compelling image the playwright William Nicholson perceived in...Lewis's marriage to Joy Davidman, and how close Nicholson comes to realizing that image theatrically."

The stage version is made of sterner stuff than the new film. In the play's first scene, Jack Lewis, delivering a lecture, addresses the question of why God makes or lets us suffer. His answer, "the blows of God's chisel, which hurt us so much, are what make us perfect," is something that Lewis believes intellectually but doesn't feel with his entire being. By the final curtain, because of the suffering he has undergone, Lewis faces the audience as a transfigured man, prepared, even longing to undergo his own death because only death can release him from the "shadowlands" of earthly life into the higher reality of heaven where he will be reunited with Joy. Head knowledge has become heart knowledge. The stage play, when well performed (as it certainly was on Broadway with Jane Alexander and Nigel Hawthorne), provides a deeply spiritual experience.

Not so the movie. Artfully directed, photographed, and played, it is a poignant, funny-sad movie which can provoke an instant nostalgia for the dreaming spires of Oxford even in the breasts of those who have never been anywhere near Oxford. But it is also about as untranscendent as any film about C.S. Lewis could possibly be. Quite a feat, that. How did Attenborough and Nicholson bring it off?

The lineaments of the plot are the same. Jack, self-trapped in the forlorn bachelorhood he shares with his brother, Warnie, and in the academic routine he shares with a bunch of academic stiffs (no Tolkein, no Owen Barfield, no Hugo

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Dyson on view in this movie, since any suggestion of bracing intellectual companionship would queer Nicholson's dramaturgical pitch), encounters an American, Jewish, ex-Communist, soon-to-be-divorcée Joy Davidman Gresham, marries her to give her British citizenship, then marries her before God when her first bout with cancer makes him realize how much he loves her. Joy has a seemingly miraculous remission, then succumbs. Lewis is left to spend the rest of his life...how?

The answer given by this movie indicates how a spiritual experience has been yanked sharply down to earth. In the early scenes, Lewis is still seen delivering his lectures about pain being the chisel-blows of God, and this statement is still perceived as an untested, purely cerebral concept. But, at the conclusion, Lewis does not affirm his belief as now verified by his experience. Instead, he quotes a remark of Joy's, "the pain now is part of the happiness then." This Lewis isn't braced for the afterlife by the heartbreak of Joy's death. Rather, he has accepted suffering (as J.W.N. Sullivan said Beethoven did) "as one of the great structural lines of human life." Earthly happiness is worth the suffering we undergo when we lose the bringer of happiness. I found this conclusion quite as poignant as that of the play's but not quite so grand. Oddly enough, it makes Lewis's fiercely held Christian beliefs quite inessential to the main dramatic action. After all, an atheist or agnostic can learn to accept earthly suffering in the same way that this movie's version of Lewis does. There is no wholehearted acceptance of the strokes of God's chisel at this movie's fade-out, no more talk of Shadowlands.

Another way Nicholson diminishes the spiritual aspect of his story is by deleting the scene in which Joy tells Jack Lewis of her first apprehension of God's existence. Though many of Joy's qualities attracted Lewis, he would obviously be especially drawn by her personal experience of the holy. And since Joy came to her conversion after a long period of Communist commitment, we may well wonder how this transformation came about. But the script never answers this question and Lewis never even raises it. A breathtaking omission in light of who Lewis and Davidman were in real life, yet a logical omission considering the kind of movie Attenborough and Nicholson want to make. For *Shadowlands* is no longer the story of the romantic union of two equally life-perplexed, God-seeking individuals, perfectly matched in intellect and mettlesome high spirits. It is now the story of an overgrown teddy bear, lovably bookish and unworldly, who is rescued from emotional suffocation and his own virginity by a warmhearted, tough-tender earth mother who shatters his routine, skewers his narrow-minded colleagues, and takes him on a motor tour of the English countryside. Let's face it: this *Shadowlands* is really the latest rendition of *Goodbye, Mr. Chips*.

"As soon as I saw you, I said to myself, there's a man who isn't married."

And a nice rendition it is. Richard Attenborough's direction is the best work of his career. It's as if the intimacy of the story had reined in Attenborough's penchant for visual fustian and incoherent storytelling. Each directorial stroke makes its point succinctly.

Following his triumph in *The Remains of the Day*, Anthony Hopkins's Jack Lewis comes across as *The Butler Escapes*. For, like Stevens in *The Remains*, Nicholson's version of Lewis is a man who has fashioned his own leash and wears it with conviction. In researching this role, Hopkins must have read Lewis's confession that emotional safe-playing was his greatest temptation. Hopkins has zeroed in on that trait and amplified it. This Jack Lewis is an overgrown boy who keeps his eyes on the carpet in the presence of an attractive female. This virginal, flustered quality is the keynote of the first three quarters of the performance. Later, when Lewis is moved to passion, first by the love of Joy, then by anger at her death, Hopkins's specialty—staccato bursts of emotion issuing out of a seemingly passive exterior—comes into play and makes viewers sit up wide-awake in the knowledge that there is more to this man's character than they had suspected. And so another triumph is added to Hopkins's seemingly unbreakable chain of triumphs.

But Debra Winger's triumph is bigger. While Hopkins tailors Lewis to match his peculiar strengths as an actor, Winger extends the boundaries of her talent to encompass Joy. Though too pretty and still too young for the role, she bestows the best sort of amnesia on the viewer. She wipes out her own backlog of characterizations and makes you accept this woman as the only Debra Winger you have ever seen. Nicholson has given Joy a few too many wisecracks, but Winger never lets us forget the emotional neediness that deploys those wisecracks like SOS signals. When Jack casually asks his Yuletide guest if her husband is looking after himself for Christmas, Winger raps out "Yes!" with a speed and fierceness that bespeak a world of marital woe.

So, by all means, go see *Shadowlands* but be prepared to take it on its own terms. This is a C.S. Lewis biopic for secular humanists in search of a good cry. I believe they constitute a sizable audience.

RICHARD ALLEVA

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The Creed in contemplation

BELIEVING THREE WAYS IN ONE GOD
A Reading of the Apostles' Creed
Nicholas Lash
University of Notre Dame Press, $21.95, 136 pp.

Robert P. Imbelli

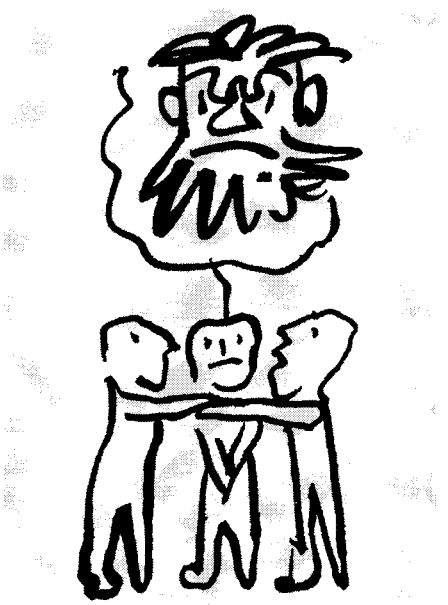
In illo tempore, when public reading during silent meals was the norm at monasteries and retreat houses, Nicholas Lash's new book would have been the perfect accompaniment to a supper of brown bread and barley soup. For the book is frightfully nourishing, if more than slightly austere. Moreover, it too demands to be chewed in small morsels. Indeed, this slim volume will provide ample theological fare for a month of meals (Sundays festively excluded).

Only a first-rate thinker and stylist could achieve such a union of substance and brevity. And Lash, the first Roman Catholic since the Reformation to hold a chair in divinity at Cambridge, is outstanding in both the depth of his thought and the clarity of his writing. The present book is addressed to nonspecialists in theology who pray the Creed and would like to ponder its meaning and implications more fully and to do so in a meditative and, ideally, communal manner. Such *lectio* will, no doubt, be demanding; but I am confident that its outcome will be to realize Lash's hope of bringing his readers "to a fresh sense of the way all things hang together in relation to the mystery that we confess as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."

To use a venerable word recently restored to Catholic theology and pastoral practice, Lash's intent is "mystagogic": to lead contemplatively and conceptually to a deeper appreciation of the Mystery of the Triune God, in whom we live and move and have our being. The Creed itself is trinitarian in structure, confessing the triune character of God and the threefold pattern of God's activity of creating, redeeming, and transforming the world. And this trinitarian identity of God and God's work calls forth and sustains the trinitarian shape of Christian existence. The Creed articulates our commitment to at-one-ment with God, among humans, and with the created universe, thus effecting humanity's harmony with the very rhythms of God's trinitarian life.

Indeed, Lash insists, the Creed, rather than a catalogue of diverse items, is the faith-filled recital of a single story, a drama, which did not occur once upon a time, but is actual and ongoing. *Today* God is creating, redeeming, and transfiguring the world and humankind. And in this same today of faith we are called to covenant, to assent, whereby revelation is actualized in us through Christ and in the Holy Spirit.

The book's structure resembles the intricate pattern of a symphony, with each successive movement taking up, refining, and complementing themes previously sounded. Thus each of the three articles of the Creed must be read and reread in the light of the others; even as the three divine "persons" indwell one another mutually and inseparably. This "co-inherence" of the Three in God and its reflection in the interrelatedness of all things which come forth from God (bearing in their very being the imprint of their trinitarian origin and destiny) makes the realization of communion the very matter of both contemplation and of action, inspiring a "contemplative praxis." There can be no purely private contemplation of the Triune God; and no human action that does not affect the common good.



However, unlike others who invoke words like "mutuality" and "relationship," Lash's austerity derives in large measure from the absence of either sentimentality or nostalgia in his vision. For him darkness is all too real and all too threatening, both in the heart of matter and in the hearts of humans. Faith's confession is that the Light shines and that darkness does not ultimately prevail. But there is no hint of "cheap grace" here. For the cost to God is not less than everything: the crucifixion of the dearly Beloved. Yet, even in the face of Love's total gift, our "strenuous resistance to reality" perdures and requires redemption. Thus Lash shows rare appreciation of the Christian way as essentially *paideia*, formation, education: the time-consuming and time-redeeming training in Christianity, in its language and practices.

In a short, striking final chapter, Lash recapitulates his reflections by retelling the Creed's narrative as the story of the "three gardens." God plants a garden in Eden, in the direction of the rising sun, and God will bring it to fulfillment in that garden city (promised in the Book of Revelation),

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where the tree of life bears fruit all year long. But, in-between, Gethsemane's garden of struggle and surrender recalls and sacramentalizes "the way in which the wilderness is made to be what it both should and will be: paradise, God's garden." It is the way of the Crucified: the peace achieved through the blood of the cross.

Lash's rich consideration of the Creed also prompts, as it should, further reflection. Let me raise up one theme: the language we employ in speaking of the Trinity.

Lash rightly insists upon God's incomprehensible nature and advocates a welcome modesty of speech in face of the mystery of God. Indeed, theologically and, perhaps, temperamentally he inclines toward the tradition of "apophatic" or "negative" theology; stressing, as it does, the ineffability of God's mystery which, to us, appears more darkness than light. Thus he counsels an "austere nescience" as the least inappropriate theological stance.

In this vein he favors dropping the language of "person" when referring to the three in God and replacing it, at least in technical discourse, with the language of "mode" or "manner" of being. The book's very title bespeaks this preference. In making this proposal, Lash stands in the splendid ecumenical company of Karl Barth and Karl Rahner—a formidable array, to say the least.

The objection to "person" language is well rehearsed. In the modern context speaking of three "persons" inevitably suggests three individual agents, hence three gods or "tritheism"; whereas originally it merely served to designate with a common word the threefold distinction Christians learn to recognize in the one God. A further danger we risk in too facilely transferring to God a word that has, over the centuries, acquired such a freight of experiential connotations is that we may thereby imagine we have achieved a purchase upon God's mystery, thus compromising "the absolute difference between God and the world."

Despite the soundness of Lash's cautions and the impressive witnesses he marshals to support them, I find his proposal unrealistic and liable to misunderstanding. He insists that his replacement terms—mode, manner, way—do not constitute "modalism": the ancient heresy that God is one without distinction, who only appears in threefold guise in the course of the successive episodes of salvation history. But the refrain he sounds on this theme still strikes me as not sufficiently differentiated, especially to ears sensitized by the tradition of the Eastern church, which so underscores what *distinguishes* the three in God. In this regard, though Lash speaks movingly and insightfully of the "Spirit," the *newness* of the Spirit's mission does not always stand out clearly; nor how the "Spirit" differs from the "Word" in God's trinitarian life.

With the German theologian Walter Kasper, then, I think it pastorally and theologically preferable to retain the venerable language of "person" in God: correcting and refining our understanding by delineating carefully the context of its usage. Our understanding and appreciation of that context has most certainly been deepened by Lash's lovely text. □

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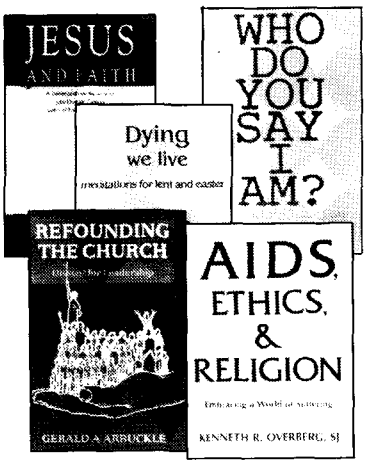

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A COSMOS BIG ENOUGH FOR GOD

SOUL
God, Self, and the New Cosmology
Angela Tilby
Doubleday, $22.50, 310 pp.

David Toolan

As the natural sciences understand the term "cosmology," it refers to a subbranch of physics dealing with the origin and development of the empirical universe (e.g., the formation of galaxies). Angela Tilby's sense of the term evokes the broader, ancient Greek sense of *kosmos*, meaning the kind of whole-story or mythos, including both physical and spiritual dimensions (as in the opening chapters of the Book of Genesis), by which people get at the basic mysteries of existence—how we place ourselves and define our meaning and responsibilities in the world. For a very long time—either because they accepted the Kantian settlement between science and religion, or because they were badly burnt by tying theological maxims to a passing scientific theory—theologians have mostly steered clear of such cosmological syntheses. Angela Tilby is not deterred, perhaps because she realizes, as Einstein did, that "religion without science is blind," and "science without religion is lame."

Ms. Tilby wants to put Humpty Dumpty together again—that is, science and religion. Toward this end, she brings a combination of skills: An award-winning TV producer for BBC, she is both scientifically and theologically literate. At Cambridge University during the 1960s, Tilby "read theology" (especially Eastern Orthodoxy). *Soul* conducts a two-way dialogue between science and the Christian tradition; both sides are asked to rethink themselves. There is something off-center, Tilby asserts, about the "anthropocentric strain" in Christianity (nature as made exclusively for human purposes), a strain that the Reformation tradition heightened to almost narcissistic proportions. If we want an intelligent interaction between science and religion, according to Tilby, we would do better to find guidance in the early apophatic theology of the Eastern fathers, people like Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nazianzus. For one thing, finding inspiration there might stop the illusion that God can be conceived, as fundamentalists would have it, as some kind of exactly calibrated spy satellite orbiting Earth.

In reading *Soul*, I kept thinking of Abraham Maslow's psychoanalysis of "hard-nosed" science, in some instances, as a case of cognitive pathology, "a technique with which fallible men try to outwit their own human propensities to fear the truth [about themselves], to avoid it, and to distort it" (*The Psychology of Science*, 1969).

Scientists come in for hard knocks—for their arrogance about science and their skepticism about everything else. They are charged with hiding out "behind an impenetrable wall of superiority," and with

"Well, she took the apple, but I'm afraid she didn't make the connection to gravity."

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treating nature "as fundamentalists treat the Bible, as an open book which needs no commentary." Just the facts, please. Tilby brings a woman's hermeneutics of suspicion to the anal personality structure—a preference for high-level abstraction remote from feeling, a love of completion, tidiness, and control—that she thinks lies behind the vocations of many of the scientists whom she interviewed for the three-part television series (aired in England in April 1992) that forms the background of her book.

I cannot be sure what message the BBC-TV series brought to the viewer (not having seen it), but the message of the more personally ruminative *Soul* is clear: In much the same way in which the mechanics of Isaac Newton once reshaped Western culture's sense of reality, creating the conviction that planet Earth is a negligible anomaly in an alien, machine-like cosmos, and that mind and matter spin off in entirely separate orbits (C.P. Snow's "two cultures," Eliot's "dissociated sensibility"), so is the cutting edge of the new cosmological theory being developed by men like Stephen Hawking, Steven Weinberg, Alan Guth, Ilya Prigogine, and others reshaping our culture today. Only this time around, the news is good for religious belief and spiritual practice.

Tilby is convinced that post-Einsteinian physics—though often against the wishes of the Nobel laureates who created it—delivers us from the "iron cage" of Newtonian determinism. I happen to think she is right: We no longer have to keep the physicist's energy and the artist's signs and symbols in separate, sealed compartments. As Aeschylus and Euripides and Shakespeare knew, the forces of nature lie deeply within us; we belong with them, they are part of our story, we of theirs. The new cosmology has room for soul—and something more than the divine clockmaker of deism.

Chapter by chapter, Tilby's book takes on the formidable task of explaining to the scientific neophyte the components of the new cosmology—Einstein's concepts of relativity, Stephen Hawking's rendition of big bang theory, the bizarre doings of black holes and quantum phenomena, the symmetry-breaking of chaos theory, and the weird recognition, in the so-called "anthropic principle," that from the very beginning the universe seems to have been fine-tuned for the evolution of life. Newton's system could never explain how anything in the universe could ever change or develop—whereas the key concepts of the new physics have to do with potentiality, open systems, unpredictability, and order emerging from turbulence. What this means is that determinism is not the last word, that just as we've gotten used to the complementarity of particles being waves, so we now have to adjust to the fact that determinacy is not incompatible with indeterminacy. Yes, it's as if this machine-like cosmos, like the Tin Man out of Oz, had suddenly decided to reveal it had, if not a heart, at least a sense of whimsical humor. Nature is not all law and order.

Tilby's expositions lack the exquisiteness and depth of a James Gleick—who in his wonderful 1987 book *Chaos: Making a New Science* (Viking, $19.95, 354 pp.) told us more than we probably wanted to know about chaos theory and

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Mandelbrot diagrams—but she makes up for these defects by unfussy directness and clarity.

None of this means, of course, that Tilby is confusing mystics with physicists, or implying that one can extract religious meanings from the behavior of a quark in a supercollider. If she had any doubt about this, most of the scientists she interviewed would disabuse her. As Tilby is well aware, one should not be taken in by the fact that Hawking and others use the term "God." For them, it is a cipher standing for the beckoning ultimate explanation, a "Theory of Everything" in the form of an equation or set of equations that would account for all the laws of physics. Hardly what believers have in mind. "The more the universe seems incomprehensible," remarks the pessimistic Steven Weinberg, "the more it also seems pointless." For the most part, these hard-nosed cosmologists have little sympathy for Tilby's synthetic project—which really claims no more than that the new cosmology leaves the God-question open.

Tilby's thesis could not be more different from the tack taken last year by Bryan Appleyard, a science columnist for London's *Sunday Times*, in *Understanding the Present: Science and the Soul of Modern Man* (Doubleday, $23, 269 pp.). Reviewing much of the same material that Ms. Tilby covers, Appleyard took the generally atheistic or agnostic scientists at their own word and argued that while some of the new developments do signal a break from the mechanical universe of classical physics, they do not substantially alter the bleak and spirit-killing vision of Newton, Darwin, and Freud. ("A very dangerous book," cried *Nature*, the voice of Britain's scientific establishment, which feared that such polemics might spur reductions in government funding for basic research.) So far as Appleyard could see, the new science will hoodwink us no less than the old science did. Like the old, it has no answer to give to ultimate questions: Who am I? Does life have a purpose? Is there a God? What lies beyond death?

Tilby wouldn't dispute Appleyard's last point. Her point, however, is a different one. Granted, the new science does not yet have cultural ascendancy. But, just as the old science once was, the new science is culturally formative and the wave of the future. It will seep through. Like some kind of Freudian slip it means more than it says, says more than it intends—and that surcharge of meaning makes it user-friendly to theists like herself. Tilby is onto something. □

WIMSEY SURPASSED

A MIND IN LOVE
Dorothy L. Sayers: Her Life & Soul
Barbara Reynolds
St. Martin's Press, $25.95, 398 pp.

Edward T. Oakes

Nowadays Dorothy L. Sayers is known by the reading public mostly for her detective fiction; but after reading this fascinating account of her life by a close friend and collaborator in her later years, I wonder how pleased she would be by her posthumous fate: "She had come to the conclusion," says Reynolds, "that detective stories tended to have a bad effect on people, making them believe that there was one neat solution for all human ills, and she would have no more part in encouraging such an attitude." And like Conan Doyle before her, she grew rather tired of letters from fans (not to mention her publisher) pleading with her to continue to pump more life into her detective, Lord Peter Wimsey, especially now that he had married Harriet Vane, a suspect in one of the earlier novels.

But books, as was famously said of Horace, have their own fate, and that

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seems to hold true within an author's canon as well: say but the name Dorothy Sayers and nearly everyone thinks first of her detective Lord Wimsey and rarely, if at all, of her theological achievements or her scholarship on Dante (that "mind in love" she called him). And yet I think it no exaggeration to say that, based on her radio plays on the life of Christ (originally written for children but which found an extremely wide audience on BBC during World War II), she must be considered one of the most effective catechists in England since Wesley; and, based on her extremely lucid explanation of the Trinity in *The Mind of the Maker*, she can certainly be regarded as the most accessible and popular apologete for Christianity in this century after C. S. Lewis, at least in the English-speaking world.

What made her many achievements possible (she was also a translator of note of early French poetry and worked full-time for many years in an advertising agency) were, without any doubt, the new opportunities in higher education that opened up for women the generation before her. After private tuition at home by her parents and aunts (her father was an Anglican clergyman), with additional tutoring by a governess, she later attended a boarding school to qualify for Somerville, the women's college at Oxford, where her musical and scholarly talents could blossom (and where she would locate her later novel, *Gaudy Night*). Living proof, in other words, of Virginia Woolf's point in *A Room of One's Own* that, given the requisite support and privacy, a woman could easily match the achievements of a man in letters and the arts.

All very true, but for Sayers this should be the end of it. Once out of the starting gate, so to speak, an achievement is an achievement; and she had little patience with the notion that women have a special epistemological credit-line in their bank account that makes them think differently from men or renders them inherently more virtuous. She was, in current jargon, an "equality feminist" and not a "separatist." In this sense, I think Reynolds is quite right when she says that "Dorothy was never a feminist and said so clearly more than once." For example, in responding to an invitation to speak at a women's group, Sayers replied: "I have a foolish complex against allying myself publicly with anything labeled feminist...The more clamor we make about 'the women's point of view,' the more we ram into people that the women's point of view is different, and frankly I do not think it is—at least not in my job."

Nor did she find the idea of women's ordination appealing, though perhaps more from her experiences as a playwright than as an apologete for Christian dogma (she refused to be called a theologian and declined an offer of an hon-

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orary doctor of divinity degree from the archbishop of Canterbury, lest it imply more training than she possessed): in a letter to C. S. Lewis she said she thought it would be more *dramatically* appropriate that a man should be, as she put it, "cast for the part" of representing Christ, though she was diffident in going public with her opinions.

Sayers certainly could turn a phrase, especially in her more sardonic and polemic moments, a skill that no doubt stood her in good stead when she took up her pen to defend the Trinity to an empirically minded and increasingly skeptical British public. This is a theme of theology that, in spite of its centrality, often spooks even the most daring of preachers, but not Sayers. The boldness and the freshness of *The Mind of the Maker* has made it for me one of the great classics of popular theology (Karl Barth was so taken with it he translated it on the spot into German), and it will never lose its appeal (it was recently brought back into print by Harper & Row with an introduction by Madeleine L'Engle).

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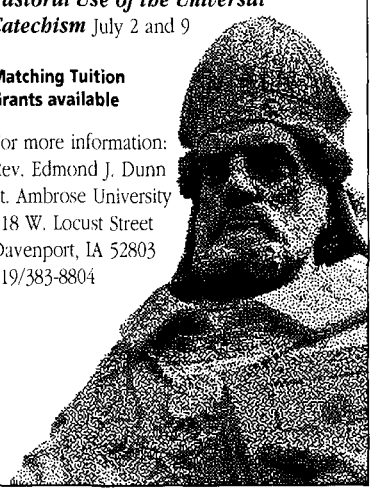

And the same tart Sayers mind is at work, cutting through the fog of obscurity and seeing the nub of the issue.

Even before the banalities of so-called inclusive language came sweeping over the world of Christian worship and life, she could anticipate its major arguments and see through its various nonsequiturs:

> Christian doctrine and tradition, indeed, by language and picture, sets its face against all sexual symbolism for the divine fertility. Its Trinity is wholly masculine, as all language relating to Man as a species is masculine. When we use these expressions, we know perfectly well that they are metaphors and analogies; what is more, we know perfectly well where the metaphor begins and ends. We do not suppose for one moment that God procreates children in the same manner as a human father and we are quite well aware that preachers who use the "father" metaphor intend and expect no such perverse interpretation of their language.

Reynolds's biography is a wonderful portrait of this tart and incisive mind; her affection for her subject does not obscure Sayers's personality but works to highlight it all the more effectively. The book is perhaps a bit too tethered to the documents to merit being called, in the subtitle, "Her Life and *Soul*." But Sayers's real brilliance, her zest for life, her love for her friends and her husband (apparently a most difficult man) come through these pages with a delightful vibrancy. She had a great mind—no one would dispute that—but her lasting claim to fame is that it became, in service to the Christian truth (and to borrow her own term for Dante), a "mind in love." □

Jack Deedy's Auden as Didymus *(Paul P. Appel, $15), which solves the mystery surrounding the identity of one of* Commonweal*'s most distinquished columnists (see* Commonweal, *August 13, 1993, pp. 20-21), is now available. The handsome 72-page book by* Commonweal*'s former managing editor analyzes the Didymus columns which have been overlooked by most Auden scholars. Deedy also discusses the full range of W. H. Auden's relationship with* Commonweal, *including Auden's published reviews and poetry as well as the Didymus columns. The book can be ordered through the publisher: 216 Washington Street, Mount Vernon, N.Y. 10553, (914) 667-7365.*

CORRESPONDENCE

(Continued from page 2)

Since historians failed me, I went to Vietnam for a thirty-day stay in 1992 trying to learn what brought us into that war. But the reasons for the war remain a mystery to me. Was it, as Richard Reeves maintains in a new book, President Kennedy's way of showing Khruschev how tough he was? Lyndon Johnson's hubris? The rubber plantations in the Delta? Offshore oil in the north?

And the trip added a new mystery: Why can't we come to grips with Vietnam now and recognize the vitality and potential of its 70 million people? On my trip I found a nearly destitute country flooded with business representatives and official delegations from all over the world (except the United States, of course), initiating deals with the country they all feel will soon be nipping at Thailand's heels as an emerging economic powerhouse. That moderately priced dress "made in China," or that "made in Japan" TV set will soon be assembled in Vietnam and sold here as a Japanese or Chinese product. Meantime, America continues to have an arm's-length relationship with the country.

It is never easy for an ordinary citizen to understand foreign policy. But in the case of Vietnam I think that for the past thirty years we have been led either by gross incompetents or by history's most successful conspirators.

JOSEPH D. POLICANO

Inducing death

Austin, Tex.

To the Editors: Surely Thomas A. Shannon's article "How Long Must We Preserve Life?" [December 3, 1993] might better have been titled "Are We Ever

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Justified in Inducing Death?" One need not be a learned theologian or social ethicist to know that the withholding of nutrition and hydration from a patient—even one in a vegetative state—is not only a failure to provide care (let alone treatment) but an act that will induce death in a predictably brief period of time. I call it murder. When death comes, the death certificate should indicate that the immediate cause was dehydration or starvation.

JAMES J. NASUTI

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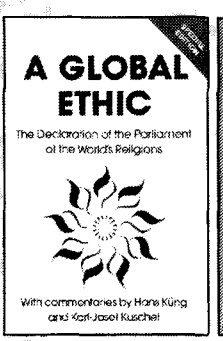
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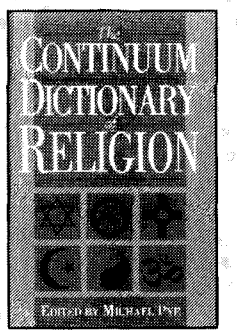

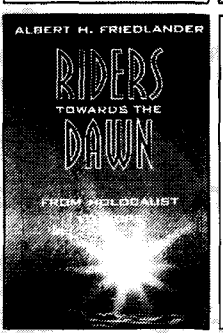

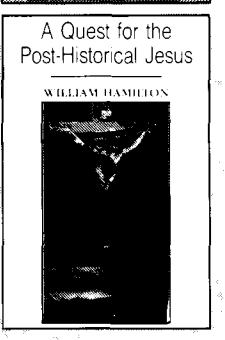

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